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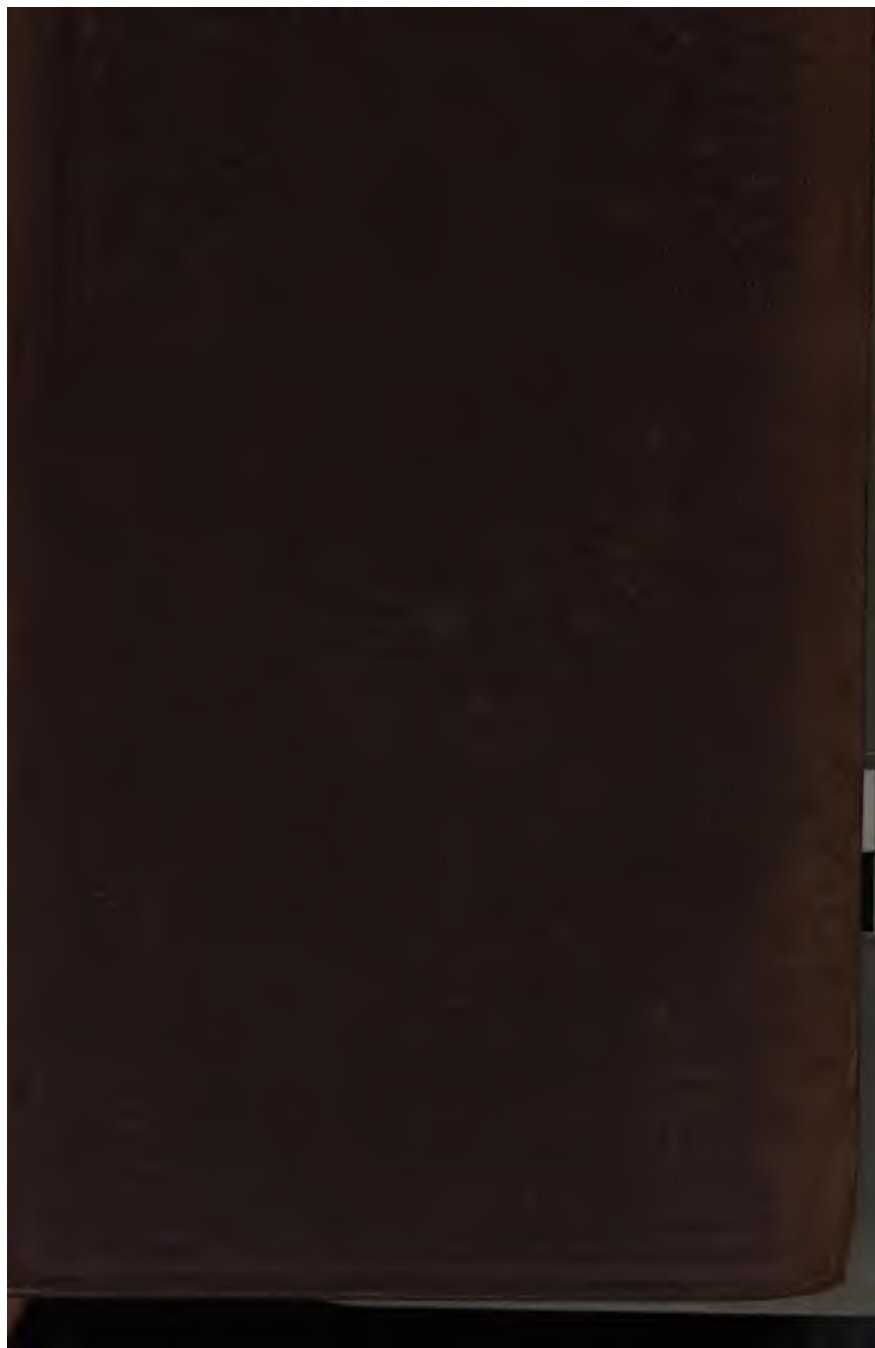
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THE
LOST BROOCH,
OR
THE HISTORY OF ANOTHER MONTH.
A TALE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "THE FAIRY BOWER."

" And what are things eternal? Powers depart,
The grey-halred wanderer steadfastly replied,
Answering the question which himself had asked
" Possessions vanish, and opinions change,
And passions hold a fluctuating seat ;
But, by the storms of circumstance unshaken,
And subject neither to eclipse nor wane,
Duty exists."

WORDSWORTH.

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1841.

504.

THE LOST BROOCH;
OR,
THE HISTORY
OF ANOTHER MONTH.

CHAPTER I.

Let me supervise the canzonet. Here are only numbers ratified, but
for the elegancy, facility, and golden cadence of poesy—*caret*—

Shakspeare.

POOR Grace felt lonely and miserable the moment the excitement of getting off the party was over. She had thought of none but Ellen. The conversation they had had together so lately was full in her mind; and Ellen's deep distress, which almost overcame her usual self-command, was to her most touching. She always in her mind compared Ellen with herself, as to their respective feelings towards their mamma and grandmamma. Following up these thoughts to a painful degree, now that she was alone in the deserted drawing-room, she felt a feeling of desolateness fill her whole heart. With her mamma and Ellen her whole world, elder and junior, seemed departed. She did not wonder at these feelings towards her mother, but was amazed at their extending to Ellen; she had no idea she loved her so well, and felt her such a guide and support. She recounted all the others, but found none like Ellen; why, she could not tell. She was vexed with herself, and vexed at not thinking more of Emily, whom she had

known so much better, and whom she dearly loved. And this vexation drove away her sorrowful feelings a little, and enabled her to dry tears, which had somewhat copiously flowed on her first feelings of sympathy for Ellen and sorrow for herself. She retired into her own room, and presently heard Emily waiting for her in the drawing-room ; and though she had a great dislike of her sorrow being betrayed, even to Emily, she would not keep so kind a friend in attendance. However she need not have hesitated, for poor Emily was more overcome than herself. She was grieved for her sister, and grieved to lose her—such a sad disappointment of the happy time they were to spend together ; “and then, you, Grace,” said she, “losing your mamma ; yet really I think I am as sorry for that as you can be, for this would have been the longest time she would have been with us, and she seems like a guardian angel to us all ; I hardly know why—and Ellen too. Ah, I feel sure none of our excursions will prosper now they are both gone, even if we have any more. I wish to go home to-morrow.”

“If I could be sure Mrs. Ward is really better, I should not care so much,” said Grace, recovering her spirit ; “you know, Emily, we may go on very comfortably here with you and the Duffs, and mamma and Ellen may return.”

“Oh, I know they will not return here,” said Emily, “for grandmamma wants your mamma on business, and it is law business, and cannot be done in a hurry. You know she always wished your mamma to be one of Ellen’s guardians, and every thing is to be settled now.”

This subject was discussed awhile, but very timidly on Grace’s side, for the idea of her mamma being guardian to a young heiress, seemed to her mind more romantic than likely. Presently Grace began wondering they had not yet seen any thing of the Duffs. Emily looked arch, and said she should have wondered too, but that she had posi-

tively forbidden them to follow her at present, for that she was sure Grace was not yet equal to their condolences.—

“Though I assure you,” added Emily, with a bright smile, which her still sorrowful feelings scarcely subdued, “my Aunt Duff was very kind, and said, ‘Grace Leslie, poor thing, must need comfort on so suddenly being left all alone,’ and Constance said she would ‘come and read to you.’”

“I am sure they are very good to think of me,” said Grace, scarcely able to repress a smile at a slight tinge of initiation which coloured Emily’s tones.

“And I hope you think me quite as good to prevent their doing more,” continued Emily, “for I chose to think you had rather see only me.”

“You are always kind and considerate, Emily,” said Grace.

“Ah, I see you won’t confess, Grace,” cried Emily, archly, “but I do hope some day to put that imperturbable face of yours out of countenance, and to see a regular broad laugh upon it at the expense of these good cousins of mine!”

“Oh, Emily, what a creature you are!” cried Grace, laughing, though not according to Emily’s aspiration.

This day was a dull heavy one to all the party, but especially to the Wards, who were anxious to know how things were going on at Langham. The Duffs of course were not so much interested in these events, and besides had made business for themselves, and acquaintances, and so did not depend upon the rest of the party as much as the others. It had been settled that they should occupy the whole house, and Grace should be joined to their family circle, but not as a visitor;—that was to be reserved for Winterton.

The post the next morning was anxiously watched by the Wards, for the expected letter from Langham. It

came, and brought very favourable news, which restored the family much to their usual spirits. Of course it was written before the arrival of the party from Hastings. Of them, if all was well, they would not hear for two or three days, since it was a two days' post, without a special messenger some miles, and it was hoped it would be unnecessary again to have recourse to that measure.

After an excitement of this kind, especially where the feelings are not personally very much interested, the reaction causes a higher flow of spirits than usual. This was especially the case with George, who seemed like a captive admitted once more to the open day ; and his tone had its influence on the rest. He revived a proposal he had made on the evening of Monday, after their visit to Bodiham Castle, that Fanny, Grace, and himself should each write verses upon the place. He had made the proposal in the malicious hope of embarrassing Grace in some way or other, having no idea she ever attempted verse. He was vexed at having excited no young-lady-like protestations on the occasion. Thus thwarted, he resolved to make her write whether she could or not ; and as Fanny entered at once into the scheme, Grace made no objection, and the verses were to be produced the next morning. Grace had written some on the spot, which were suitable enough, but she supposed it was intended that a copy should be especially composed for the occasion, and therefore set about another.

The three sets of verses shall follow without farther preface.

FANNY'S VERSES.

The unknown Knight.

I saw a Castle, buttressed and tall,
Embattled, proudly stand ;
So mighty and firm was its storied wall,
It feared not armed band.

Four circular towers at once stept forth,
That castle's side to invest ;
One to the south and one to the north,
And two to the east and west.

Long and earnest I bent my gaze,
On the brow of that portal wide ;
But 'twas still—as a castle in olden days
By spell of enchanter tied.

But behold ! like a flash of light I descry,
Waving a kerchief white,
A ladie fair, from the turret high,
The brightest of the bright.

And hark ! she cries, " Oh, knight of mine,
Come, in thy might, to my aid ;
Come, and release me, as I pine,
A sorrowful captive maid.

" Last night, again, in vision clear,
I saw thee in shadow stand ;
Black was thy charger, and black thy gear,
And raised was thy conqueror hand.

" Then haste thee, mysterious knight to me,
Oh, haste, ere my heart is riven,
For to-morrow's dawn, I wot, will see
Thy bride to another given."

■ ■ ■ ■ ■

I started back, in amazed mood,
As the ladie ceased her wail,
For beside me stood a charger good,
With a knight clad in sable mail.

Whence he came, I cannot declare,
Or when he appeared, or how,
Whether he dropt from the heavens' blue air,
Or sprung from the earth below.

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Whether he dropt from the heavens' blue air,
Or sprung from the earth below.

And thus, in discontented mood,
 We learn to loathe our daily food,
 And every home-born plan ;
 We live upon unreal things,
 Scarce fit for fairy queens and kings,
 Poison to mortal man.

Ah, no ! our days are bright as their's,
 Our joys as pure, and e'en our cares,
 Are rich with wealth untold ;
 Fair poesy, with hallowed pride,
 Gleams like a halo at our side,
 And all our world is gold.

Mistrust me not ! no churl am I,
 To grudge thy fame, O, age gone by !
 Thy glorious worth and powers ;
 Our age spins webs, and gains in length,
 Loses in preciousness and strength,
 In both, thou passest ours.

Yet, Oh, may ne'er my grateless heart
 Pine for an untried ancient part,
 And spurn the appointed task ;
 Let it the daily round fulfil,
 Be found each moment constant still,
 This only would I ask.

GEORGE'S LINES.

Walls have ears.

Tune—"I'd be a butterfly."

I'd be a stone-in-wall, set in a tower,
 Where brick, flint, and mortar, in union meet,
 Gazing around me from hour to hour,
 And hearing all histories, harrowing and sweet.

I'd never languish for wealth or for power,
I'd never sigh to see slaves at my feet,
I'd be a stone-in-wall, set in a tower,
Hearing all histories, harrowing and sweet.

Oh, could I pilfer the wand of a fairy,
I'd have a pair of eyes, keen, sharp, and bright,
Whose vision can pierce thro' hall, parlour, and dairy,
And see in a moment the singular sight ;
Those who have wit must be watchful and wary,
Genius, alas ! nought but falsity brings ;
I'd be the voice of truth, on the contrary,
Plain as a pikestaff I'd picture all things.

What, though you tell me of tempests uproarious,
Heat, frost, and ivy my bitterest foe,
Give me but eyes and tongue, instruments glorious,
Then, with my ears, I'm a very great go :
I'd gaze abroad, through the ages—notorious,
I'd view the change of this strange world below ;
Barons to farmers, and ladies victorious
Turned in a trice to Mistress So and So.

Fanny's verses were the most open to remark, and obtained the first notice. To Grace's surprise, Constance was warm in their praise, and on George observing he should have expected her to call them ridiculous, she warmly protested that they were no more ridiculous than any poetry, and in fact all poetry was ridiculous ; but if poetry was to be allowed at all, Fanny's was very good, as all persons with any feeling of poetry would say. Campbell controverted her general theory that all poetry was ridiculous, and a discussion in which Grace took her share, followed on the abstract question. At length, George, who was rather tired of the subject, and had been looking over the verses, exclaimed, " I suppose, Fanny, this is what is called love at first sight."

"Yes," replied Fanny.

"Or rather before first sight," continued Emily, "for the lady had never seen the knight except in a dream, you know."

"Well, then, it was love, not first sight, but second sight, according to the Scotch fashion," said George; "I always suspect a little Scotch blood in the Duffs. But, Fanny," added he, pretending to speak low, and looking significantly, "you were not so good a hand at a leap at Battle Abbey as your heroine. Why did you not take better aim?—How grand this is to be sure,—‘his corselet rang’ as he *caught* the lady, but rather a hard and cold reception for her; don't you think she hurt her arm, Fanny? not broke it you know, but gave it a gentle twist, or a slight wound, that might assure her of the reality of the thing, like lady Barbara's ghost."

Fanny here gave a very meaning look at Grace on George's unconscious echo of her own sentiments. "Fifty fathoms," continued he, "only think, *fifty fathoms!* don't smile, Grace, for shame! fathoms is a poetic license, you know 'feet' would be so common! besides it gives one a new idea of the atmosphere, and is altogether a fine original mode of measurement, as also is 'terces'; I never heard the word before except as a barrel, but it brings before the mind the vast width of the moat better than any old known word could have done; I call it bold and grand. Well, Fanny, I congratulate the world and posterity on your walk to the Lover's-seat, and your excursion to Battle Abbey, to which together we must be indebted for this accurate and poetical description of the Lover's-leap."

It was in vain Fanny protested that none of the circumstances to which George alluded had any thing to do with her poem. George considered her assertions a poet's license, but so earnest was she, that Grace at least, of the rest of the party, gave credit to her, and considered the

verses a most extraordinary coincidence. Grace had so often met with the same sort of accident in her experience, that she could understand it in the case of another. George however still rattled on in his criticisms. Grace longed for a few changes and touches in Fanny's lines to free them from the possibility of such criticisms as George's, but she really admired their ease and flow, and on saying so directed George's attack upon her own.

"There is one thing remarkable in Fanny's and Grace's," observed Emily, "that, though Fanny professes so much greater admiration of the old Castle than Grace, she turns her back upon it, and sympathizes with those who run away from it; while Grace really and truly honours it, and links it in our minds and feelings to present times."

"So do I in my poem," cried George, "and I protest that there is more sense in any one line of mine than in all Fanny's and Grace's put together."

"No, no, George," cried Emily, "your tone is to debase by-gone generations; you would sink their age to ours, Grace raises ours to theirs."

"Well, that is just the same," said Constance, "I see no difference."

"But I see a great deal," continued Emily, "and if George's lines were in earnest, I would try to prove it."

"Why," pursued Constance, "if both are the same, they must be the same, and there is an end of it. It is nonsense to say they are different."

In the absence of Ellen, Emily was resolved to endeavour to bring out her meaning, and with more effort than her remarks usually cost her, she replied, "Grace allows the past to be poetical, and makes the present the same; George makes the present unpoetical, and the past the same."

"Very terse and neat, Emily," exclaimed Campbell,

"it does you credit, really you improve, I should have thought it Ellen."

Emily was exceedingly pleased with her cousin's compliment, though it was said playfully. The Duffs were not however so well satisfied that Ellen, should be accounted cleverer than Emily, and some sentences passed between them on the question. Meanwhile Grace continued the subject of George's verses. "I do think, Emily," said she, "you are rather hard on George, his verses are a mere squib; parodies are allowed liberty."

"Very true," said Emily, "and you know I said, *if* he were in earnest I would go on to criticise. But it was rather Constance I was answering than George, only he did seem inclined to battle for his sense."

"Well," cried George, "I am prepared. I assert again, my verses are sound."

"You would say," observed Grace, laughing, "that they embody true sense and sentiment; that they are the spirit of poetry, playing around the thoughtful brow of profound philosophy."

"Exactly," cried George; "in fact," added he, politely, "they combine the genius of my two competitors. But, Fanny, I was just now about to ask if your legend did not give the name to the castle."

"No," replied Fanny, "you know the story is my own."

"Oh, Fanny, you spoil all," said he, with pretended vexation, "you should not confess that; you know the lady was constantly looking out to see a *Body come*, which soon got corrupted into *Body-home*, or *Bodiham*."

George was taken to task for intruding a pun, and so lame a one. Grace remarked that George was privileged just now, for that his parody was not the most exact possible. George cried out upon Grace for *ratting* so soon, and insisted on her proofs. She very readily complied, and exposed the weak points in his composition, which must

be sufficiently apparent to those who know the original. Emily was much entertained at the contest, and Constance followed up the attack, by observing, that though the proverb says, that "Walls have ears," it does not say that stones have. George was rather pleased than otherwise, at having his ingenuity taxed, to defend the several points in his effusion, but he was not inclined to let the conversation close with a critique on himself; he therefore presently turned the attack again upon his cousin. "Fanny," said he, "I observe you still retain your early and peculiar love of 'dying,' at the end of every poem of yours; I admire it. I think it satisfactory, as well as fine, to follow events to their close."

"That is a speech, George," said Constance, "without any meaning."

"It has full as much, Constance, by your own showing," replied George, "as the object of it. But I think better of Fanny's poetry than you do. Fanny," continued he, "I suppose you mean to show your verses to your knight, Guppy, since they have no personal allusions."

"To be sure I shall," replied Fanny, "he was one of our party.—Why should I not?" added she, on George making up a peculiar face.

"Oh, no reason in life against it," said George, "especially as I have no doubt the lady of the tower would have done just the same to her own true knight."

"You are very ridiculous, George," said Mary Anne.

"Then I am like Fanny's poetry, which has elicited Constance's admiration," returned George.

CHAPTER II.

Three bounds that noble courser gave.

Scott.

THERE were several places yet left to be lionized. One was the ruins of an ancient church. It had been settled to visit this place on the day before, but the events that occurred disturbed this order of things. However, as no letter arrived on Thursday morning, it was not considered necessary to defer the excursion longer, and it was fixed for that day. Mrs. Duff declined accompanying the party. Her sister thought this unwise, as there was abundance of room. To Emily's great satisfaction, her mother proposed accompanying them. Emily had good sense and prudence, and she wished for the escort of some of the elders of the party, now that a stranger made their company less of a family society than before. "It is so different, mamma, from being well acquainted," said she; "if we knew Mr. Guppy as well as Reginald Freemantle, or even as Frank Freeman, I should not think about it; but the Duffs will not at all see it in this light."

Emily went on to express surprise that the Duffs seemed so much to forget their last mentioned friend, and she declared her belief that had he been asked to accompany the party to-day, he would have gone.

Mrs. Ward had taken this opportunity of expostulating with her sister, and endeavouring to convince her of Mr. Guppy's attention to Fanny. Mrs. Duff took up the word "attention," and observed if it were well applied in any quarter, it must be to her eldest daughter, not Fanny; that however she thought nothing of it; he had a great

respect for them all ; that he knew that her father would give Mary Anne nothing at present, and it was not to be expected that a young man of his appearance and evident connexions could marry upon nothing ; and that her daughters were not like girls of the world, looking after husbands. Mrs. Ward in answer to this observed " that religious young ladies sometimes fell in love ;" and her sister replied, that she was thankful to say *her* girls had never read novels, which both ladies considered a sufficient close to the argument.

When the carriages came to the door, it was found that there appeared a new equipage among them, in the form of a very stylish looking gig, with a noble horse. George was hovering about it, examining the harness, &c., in company with the groom ; and it was concluded it was for himself and Campbell. Mr. Guppy took his place from the cottage with the three eldest Miss Duffs, and the rest of the party were to follow in Mr. Ward's carriage. It was found, however, that George had no such idea of Campbell for a companion. He protested and declared that there was no other vehicle to be had in all Hastings but this same gig, and that he was resolved to see if Grace had nerve to sit behind a horse with four legs, and a carriage with two wheels ; that the horse was the quietest creature in the universe, and there was no danger at all, and so she and nobody else must go. Grace laughed at the consistency of his statements, about which George did not much concern himself, if he got his own way. Mrs. Ward obtained a satisfactory character of the horse from the groom, who averred that the animal was as gentle as a lamb ; and at length Grace was handed into the doubtful place. She had no fears, nor had Mrs. Ward really, for George was a capital whip, and cautious ; and the horse, though tall and grand, looked gentle and noble. Soon they were off. The gentle and noble steed soon glided past the Duffs' carriage, which

had preceded him some quarter of an hour, though it was going at a good pace.

"We must be going fast," said Grace, "though we do not appear to be so; how soon they are out of sight."

"About twelve miles an hour," said George.

"At least," returned his companion.

"Twelve and a half now, I dare say," continued he, and complimented Grace on her accuracy.

On they went; Grace enjoyed the rapid speed, for it had certainly increased, and she watched the movements of the animal with admiration and interest. "I did not think it was safe to gallop in a gig," said she, presently.

"Some people think so," said George, coolly, "but I hope you will have no cause to be of their opinion. You are not afraid, are you?" added he, after a slight pause.

"Oh, no; not afraid," said Grace; "I enjoy it—it is most delightful. I should like him to go faster and faster if it is not unsafe;" and as she spoke, the first part of her wish was gratified, for certainly the noble creature did go faster and faster. "What strides he takes," said Grace, presently; "I could fancy he would go round the world in three bounds."

Her own remark brought to her mind the charger in "Rokeby," who took the church, not the earth, in three bounds. But she only thought it, and continued to enjoy the speed, the clear air, and their very even motion. Suddenly it struck her;—"Suppose any thing impeded our way, or met us!" and in an instant the truth flashed across her mind. "How could she have been so inconceivably insensible and blind! As if any man in his senses would drive at such a pace of his own free-will!" The horse was running away at the most desperate speed. She spoke not a word, stirred not, breathed not differently from before; not the slightest movement of hand or foot betrayed her discovery. Yet, how is it? what is that mys-

terious sympathy which makes itself seen, heard, and felt, without the intervention of the senses? George knew the truth was no longer hidden from Grace; he would not speak, however; he feared mistaking, or not understanding her feeling; he did not know her sufficiently to guess her sensations: his horror was, lest she should lose her self-possession, and leap out. Presently, in precisely her usual tone and manner, looking in his face, she asked, "Will he kick?"

"No," said George, rather more moved than herself, "only sit still—sit still, and I trust—I believe you are safe."

On, on they went. Grace's mind turned first to their friends. Oh, how glad she was that they were long out of sight, that no one could fear for them—next, to her own mother—she rejoiced even at her being so far off, as if distance would remove anxiety and events, whatever they might be. Strange are the workings of the mind in such moments of peril. Grace scarcely thought of her own danger, except in connexion with her friends. She thought of the death which one moment might bring, and, for herself, felt no alarm. All stood clear before her, and still she could wonder at that sort of perversity which would only take thought for her mother, Ellen, Emily,—Campbell, even; and, except in this way, her companion scarcely crossed her mind; he, at present, was too near herself to be remembered individually. On, on they went; ages seemed to pass. Grace's thoughts stretched all over the world, and yet were absorbed in one deep feeling of thankfulness and prayer; the one on the safety which every fresh bound brought and left, the other, that the end, whatever it should be, might still be safety. Her companion was perhaps more to be pitied, though, his mental and bodily powers being engaged, he had not the same scope for free range of thought, or, in any respect,

the temptation to the terror of despair, which sometimes possesses the weak in their helplessness, in such situations. George's thoughts were all for his companion ; she had fearlessly entrusted herself to his care, and he felt a thousand times responsible for her. All his thoughts ran in this direction, though they might by the way wander as far as to her mother. Still Grace's calmness re-assured him, and his hopes increased that the animal would tire himself out, before they came in contact with any thing, or reached any perilous declivity. Young gentlemen can imagine his feelings, as they were perhaps the exclusive property of such as himself. Grace chose once more to speak, as she fancied George might be thinking of her. She said, simply, "George, I am not afraid."

George replied, "Whatever happens, only sit still."

But the animal's pace did not decrease, and Grace presently saw that her firmness and self-command, which had been bearing on well passively, were now to be put to full proof. She perceived a broad-wheeled wagon preceding them, and a stage coach advancing. It seemed clear to her that it was impossible, according to the respective distances and positions of these carriages, that their own light vehicle could wind its way, in a road not very wide, with any prospect short of a crash. She hoped her ignorance was mistaken. George had an accurate eye, and he judged the same. One alternative presented itself : an ill-made road came in sight, slightly diverging to the left. Before long it led up a very steep hill, which was a great advantage with a runaway horse, especially if somewhat spent ; but on the other hand, it was a rough road, probably becoming worse before long, and the catastrophe might be dreadful. However the high road seemed certain misfortune, and the other might lead to safety ; at any rate, it would defer the evil day. To Grace's great satisfaction, George quietly guided the horse's head into the bye-lane,

which happily was at a safe and convenient angle. The motion now was very different. Grace expected the springs or the shafts to crack every moment, and had to hold by the carriage, as she had not hitherto done. But what was worse in one respect was better in another—the increased fatigue to the horse more than equalled the inconvenience of those behind him, and to Grace's inexpressible thankfulness, she perceived the creature relax his speed as he was reaching the top of the hill. George knew the moment when danger was over, and at once communicated it to Grace, and expressed his own feelings by a serious and fervent exclamation of the words, "Thank God." Grace's heart echoed it, it need scarcely be said; and at the same time she felt more esteem and affection for George, as well as more admiration altogether, than ever he had excited by his kindness, his good humour, his sense, or his wit.

All the party joined at Winchelsea church, and the wonderment at the delay in George and Grace's movements was excessive.

"Where can you have been?" said Mary Anne, as George and Grace came up walking; "we have been here this hour."

"We made a *detour* of several miles," replied George, drily.

"And that, I suppose, was the reason, George, that you passed us so fast," continued his cousin.

"I do not think we can pretend that," said Grace; "I believe, George, we cannot deny that our *detour* was a compulsory one."

"What robbers!—banditti!" cried Fanny, clasping her hands, and looking well the picture of hope.

Of course she was laughed at and rallied as usual, by the usual individuals, but her suggestion had the effect of breaking the ice for George, and between himself and Grace the tale came out with entire yet favourable truth.

His mother looked grave, and was ready to take him to task and scold him ; but Mary Anne somewhat forestalled her, which was a happy circumstance for George, as he dreaded displeasing the one, and cared not for the other. Grace, too, was glad that George should escape any severity ; he had behaved so well, and she was sure he was not the least in fault.

" Well, George," began Mary Anne, " I am sure I am glad I did not trust myself with you."

" So am I," replied George.

" How frightened I should have been ; I am sure I should have screamed."

" I am sure you would," answered George, " and would have frightened the horse into tenfold speed."

Grace smiled to herself at the possibility.

" I'll tell you what you would have done, Mary Anne," continued George, " you would have jumped out."

" Mary Anne could not have done that," said Fanny, in the good-humoured tone superior power gives.

" Indeed, Fanny," observed Grace, " she could—any body could, I am sure ; if once a person gave way to the wish, the thing would be done. I can quite fancy being obliged to bind one's will as by chains to one's seat."

" I am sure I felt no inclination to leap out," said George.

" Because," replied Grace, " you were driving ; you had something to do ; but it is quite different for those who sit by, and have nothing to do but think, and no responsibility.—Besides," added she, smiling, " you are strong, and make better ballast than we."

" Than such as you," replied George, looking at her with pretended disdain, " but not as Mary Anne."

" Oh, there is a great advantage in height and size," remarked Mary Anne, " but in spite of that, I think I

should have jumped out ; I think it would have been right."

"We pardon people, Mary Anne, who do such things in their terror," said her aunt, somewhat shortly, "but not those who talk so thoughtlessly in safety."

"I do think Grace is rather correct in her view," observed Constance ; "the motion must confuse the faculties."

"Especially in an open carriage," continued Grace.

"Ah, but in a close one too ! You know poor dear Miss Brown, who had such strong nerves, jumped out of the window of a close carriage."

"Oh, I cannot fancy doing that," said Grace ; "there seems to me no temptation—no impulse—a person must *get* out of a close carriage, not leap out in a moment.—What did become of her ?"

"She was killed on the spot, of course," said George.

His supposition was quite true.

George took the opportunity of saying, much more gravely than was his custom, "I feel I owe everything to-day to Grace's calmness and self-possession, if she had given way all would have been over ; and I hope all you young ladies will remember this, if ever any such danger happens to yourselves—keep your seat—never jump out."

It is doubtful if George would have been so explicit at that early moment if his mother had been within hearing. He did not wish to alarm her more than possible.

CHAPTER III.

Three civil brawls, bred of an airy word.

Shakspeare.

THE spirits of the party before long recovered their tone, though nothing happened to call them forth in any unusual manner. The church had been a fine cruciform building, and was now in ruins. The chancel was in good preservation; the aisles also were standing, and four noble arches, springing from slender clustered columns, which had supported the tower; but the exterior was covered with ivy, which clung around the old walls in picturesque luxuriance. There were some monuments and effigies still remaining, amid the ruins: two were of monks; and this revived the subject of monasteries, which was before discussed at Bodiham. Constance had read nearly all of the book before alluded to, with which Mr. Guppy had presented her, and did not deny that it had certainly modified her feelings respecting existing establishments of that description. "I was not," she repeated, "against the abstract principle of vows, but against the errors of doctrine with which they seem inseparably connected. If monks and nuns were not Papists, I should not object to them: and your book shows that even the Papists, many of them, have deep experimental and vital religion."

"Why, Constance," exclaimed Mary Anne, in utter amaze, "surely you are not going to take part with the Papists!"

"I hope I shall always take part with those who are Christian brethren," replied Constance, "and such, many of these seem."

"Are you converted, Grace?" asked George; "I ought to know, for I was just about to congratulate the world upon the avowed opinions of such a young lady on the subject."

Grace laughed.

"And really, Grace," continued George, "you actually do mean to marry?"

"I never said so," replied Grace.

"You said," pursued George, "you did not mean to be a nun."

"And yet I may not mean to marry," added Grace, laughing.

"Oh, may not!" said George; "but I said, do not."

"Well, *do not*," answered Grace, in agreement.

"I cannot understand your views, Grace," said George.

"No wonder, for I have none," replied Grace, wishing to get rid of the discussion.

"Why, George," said Campbell, "do you think people sit down and resolve whether or not they will marry?"

"To be sure," said George; "sensible people."

"Then of course you have made up your mind?"

"To be sure I have!"

"Pray let us know which way," continued Campbell.

"Why I mean to marry," said George; "I mean to have a wife, and her name shall be Media. She shall be neither tall, nor short; nor fat, nor thin; nor handsome, nor ugly; nor high, nor low; nor clever, nor stupid; nor untaught, nor learned; nor good, nor bad; this will be in my eyes perfection."

"You have devised an ingenious description for excluding the whole race of ladies," said his sister; "to what planet do you mean to go for your type of perfection?"

"Oh, I have no doubt I shall meet with my Media upon our own globe," replied George; "but really and

truly I do mean to marry if I can, as I suppose every body else does ; that is, if I see a lady of this description who puts it in my head, and who then is so kind as not to desire me to put it out again."

"Well, then, after all it depends upon circumstances," said Campbell.

"But *all* ladies would not be so very cruel," observed Mr. Guppy.

"Perhaps my brother means to be satisfied with his experiment on his Media," said Emily, who had her own views on the subject.

Mr. Guppy laughed gently, and presently added, "Then I imagine he would take care to be pretty sure before he came to the point.—Besides," continued he, with a smile, "you cannot suppose it likely that your brother would be very unsuccessful even with his Media."

"I hope not," said Emily, coolly.

"I don't know, Emily," said Mrs. Ward, looking at her son, and laughing, "I don't know if George would take a disappointment so much to heart as you seem to fancy."

"Oh, mamma," cried Emily, gaily, "I was not thinking of George entirely."

"Miss Ward is so kind as to wish," observed Mr. Guppy, "to endow us with a quality which I rather fear we are too apt to consider as the exclusive property of the fair sex."

"Ladies would not make so severe a remark," said Mrs. Ward.

"They are all kindness and gentleness !" returned Mr. Guppy, politely, "but I hold that true fealty to the fair sex, consists not so much in constancy, as devotion."

"Surely you are still very hard upon gentlemen," observed Mrs. Ward ; "I hope ladies would not fare so ill with you."

"Ladies, in my opinion, are all but—angels," replied Mr. Guppy, with an expressive double glance directed to the twin sisters ; " I hold very different views concerning ladies from most—so gentle is their nature, I must ever consider them more coy than cruel."

"Or, even if not so," added Emily, in a peculiar tone of delicate irony, "as Lady Minette would say—

‘For if there’s a dozen that won’t,
There’s surely a couple that will.’”

Emily gave the couplet in an imitative manner. Lady Minette’s style was remarkable, and not to be mistaken by those who knew her. To those who did not, Emily’s inflections appeared characteristic enough to be equally striking ; and her speech made far more sensation than she wished or expected. Fanny was greatly entertained, her sisters scarcely less so, and Mr. Guppy, with no less warmth than *bonhomie*, entered into their amusement.

But the original subject was not suffered to die away. Mr. Guppy’s book, together with the actual memorials of monastic times which lay before the party, seemed to prepare and dispose them for the consideration of the subject, and a discussion of some length ensued, in which Constance took the principal share. At length Campbell appeared to bring it somewhat to a close by observing, "We are always incomplete on this subject without Freeman. I wish he had been among us."

"Well," said Mary Anne, "I think it very conceited in a young man, like Frank Freeman, to give out that he will never marry."

"He does not do that, Mary Anne," observed her brother.

"But, he says, that if he gets a fellowship, he shall

not," added Constance, "and that is much the same thing, for as he devotes himself to the classics he is pretty sure of a fellowship."

"Oh, silly fellow," exclaimed Mrs. Ward, who was listening to the young people's talk, as they surrounded the temporary seat they had made for her; "silly fellow, he will do like other people, and talk very differently six years hence."

"Freeman is a capital theorist on all subjects," said George, "but this does not do his originality credit, it is only what so many have said before him. They all resolve, like their prototype Benedict, to die bachelors, and when they change their minds, cry with him, 'Nay, never flout at me for what I have said against it.' Man is a giddy thing, and this is my conclusion."

"But does Frank Freeman speak like such as Benedict in a off-hand manner, or on serious principle?" asked Emily.

"Oh, quite seriously, does he not, Campbell?" said Mary Anne.

"Why, he certainly does mean it to be believed," replied Campbell.

"Well, I do not like that," said Emily, in a decided tone.

"But Grace does," observed George, maliciously.

"You know you are wrong there, George," said Grace.

"Indeed, I did not," replied he; "I wanted your opinion."

"I have no opinion at all," returned Grace, "only I think it very silly for people to talk about such things. Why not be quiet, and wait?"

"To be sure," said Mary Anne.

"They are only certain sure to make geese of themselves if they talk," said George; "a talking man, otherwise denominated a humbug, is to a pig, what his mind is to its

driver; both are sure to run counter to their respective guides."

"What, George!" cried Emily, "even those who assert things 'really and truly.'"

Emily's remark roused a gay laugh at George's expense.

"I claim the benefit of your own rule, Emily, for the Benedicts of the world," said George, "they are not humbugs."

"Well, I confess, George," said Emily, "there is the difference I before alluded to between you and Frank Freeman; you are more in play than he is."

"I am sure," observed Constance, "I wish people who talk, as you call it 'in play,' would wear a motley coat or a fool's cap, that one might know what credit to attach to their assertions, for their ways are highly inconvenient to those who love nothing but truth."

"There is only one way," said Campbell, "and that is, to get thoroughly acquainted with them."

"That is asking too much from those whose time is precious," said Constance, "and especially when it is only the more superficial style of characters who indulge in such practices."

"I do not think that," remarked Campbell.

"Oh, Constance, how silly you are!" cried Emily; "one can always tell what people mean, and whether they are in jest or earnest in a moment."

"I cannot," replied Constance.

"Well, then I suppose you are not so clever as some others," said Emily, laughing.

Constance seemed for a moment rather at a loss for an answer; then observed, "Cleverness is a worldly talent."

"I differ with you then, Constance," said her brother, "that is, in the sense in which you now use cleverness. Some cleverness may be worldly, but not delicate discernment of character."

"Yet true discernment of character, knowledge of human nature," observed Mr. Guppy, "cannot be learned by intuition; it can only be learned in the school of the world. How else can the pure unsophisticated mind of youth be able to guess the depths of human depravity! how else learn to partake the selfishness of the world's ways, and the world's principles!"

"You forget....." began Constance.

"I cry your mercy!" interrupted George; "I cry your mercy! no more metaphysics!"

George's manner put a stop to the public discussion of this subject, and compelled Constance to continue it privately apart with Mr. Guppy, while Mary Anne revived another that had dropped.

"But even if Frank Freeman were never to marry," said she, "there would be nothing so very remarkable in it; every body does not marry. Now there's Miss Newmarsh; she never said she would never marry, yet we always knew she would not, and she has not."

"We were speaking of gentlemen, Mary Anne," said her aunt; "nobody spoke of ladies—and certainly generally there is some reason for gentlemen remaining single—either want of means or success, or adverse circumstances, or some one great disappointment, rather than any determination made in early youth, such as Frank Freeman is silly enough to talk of."

"Well, then," said Mary Anne, continuing to produce her instances, "there is Mr. Elderton."

"I do not know Mr. Elderton, or his history, Mary Anne," said Mrs. Ward.

"Mr. Elderton, the celebrated preacher," replied Mary Anne, "surely you know him, aunt."

"He has always professed he will never marry," said Constance, who had been attracted from her *tête-a-tête* by

hearing the name of one of her favourite preachers ; " I wonder you should not know that, Mary Anne."

" I did not know it," replied Mary Anne, " well he has kept his word, for he is past fifty."

" Wait till he is past sixty," observed their aunt, laughing. " That is the age for gentlemen doing foolish things."

" Well, then," continued Mary Anne, confidently, " there is Mr. Everard, Grace's godfather, he, at any rate, has not promised never to marry, and there is no reason, of poverty, or any thing else, that should have prevented him."

" We must know people's history fully, Mary Anne, before we can decide," observed Mrs. Ward, with a glance at Grace, " but I agree with you that Mr. Everard is as little likely to marry as any man, and that his remaining single, as he has done, has been, on his part, as far as appearances go, a decided matter of choice. So, perhaps, his destiny may be a pattern for Frank Freeman's, as you rather seem to wish."

" And if Frank Freeman is ever as clever and excellent as Mr. Everard, he will do very well," observed Emily.

" Why, Emily," cried Mary Anne, " Mr. Everard is nothing but an eccentric, quaint old bachelor. How can you admire him ? he always frightened me, and you too, I am sure, when we were children ; and now I dislike him more than ever."

" Well, he pleases *me*," returned Emily, " because, perhaps, I left off being frightened at him in good time."

This remark of Emily's seemed at length to close the discussion, and the party with one consent broke up into strolling detachments, to examine other parts of the ruinous edifice. Campbell had strayed into the transepts, where the walls and windows were hung about with ivy. He stood surveying one window which seemed especially to have attracted his admiration. " Come here," cried he,

"all of you, I want every one to come and stand here!" The party one by one, followed the call, and he placed them in a certain spot in the ruin. There was a very peculiar effect of light, owing to some accidental circumstance. The foreground was dusk, if not dark, and a brilliant gleam of sunshine poured its bright rays behind a fairly formed arch; pendant wreaths of ivy entwined with some coloured wild flowers hung down in front; the effect was that of fantastic disorder, carefully arranged by the most skilful art. "Now look," continued Campbell, "and tell me what that reminds you of?—How dull you must be! how obtuse," added he, almost angry at the silence of the party, "look again, *you* must know, Mary Anne,—at least *you* ought to know;—cannot you guess—any of you?"

"Oh, to be sure, Campbell, we know," replied the good-natured Emily, "to be sure we know, you mean the Fairy Bower, and very like indeed it is."

"Well, then, why did you not say so at once? I must have you all confess at least," continued Campbell, laughing, "that you have been abominably slow and stupid. "Only look! one must have been the type of the other."

"Like Fanny's unknown knight, a second-sight," said George, drily, forgetting, and almost as soon remembering the presence of Mr. Guppy.

Campbell, a little annoyed at this allusion of George's, continued his remarks, and at length placed himself at Grace's side, requesting her to make a sketch of the arch which had so much engaged his sympathy. The rest of the party again dispersed about the ruin. Campbell meanwhile presided over Grace's sketch, giving hints and directions in order to ensure the most favourable resemblance of his favourite idea. Grace was pleased and struck by his intermediate remarks on the scene, and was silently considering how differently men express themselves from women on matters of taste; when Constance appeared and

called her brother away. Campbell's allusion had reference to a passage in the early history of the young people, of the actual circumstances of which Campbell was in ignorance ; perhaps his sister Constance enlightened him on the subject. Something passed apparently which changed his mood during his absence, for, on his return to Grace, he received the sketch she had just cut out of her book for him in silence, and did not revert to the subject.

There was much more beside the church worthy of being seen in Winchelsea. It is a place of great antiquity, containing reliques which bespeak its former importance, though historically but little is known about them. To many of these spots of interest the party, or individuals of them bent their steps ; after which they congregated together, in order to return to the small inn where they had put up their horses.

"Oh, Grace," cried Emily, joining her and taking her arm, "walk with me ! I want you—I am in such a fume—I am in such a rage—I can speak to no one but you."

"What is the matter?" asked Grace, amused at her friend's wrath.

"Why, you *must* know—I cannot bear the man. I abhor—I detest—I abjure him !"

"What man ?" asked Grace, laughing.

"Why, that miserable abstraction of a Guppy—you must know, Grace."

Oh," cried Grace, "for what he said just now, about George."

"To be sure ! why, how coolly you take it, I am sure, Grace, you cannot like what he said."

"No," replied Grace, "but I did not expect any thing better, so I really hardly noticed it ; *that* is one of the things I meant, when I called him like a partner."

— but I would not dance with a man if I knew he had odious sentiments."

"You know, Emily, I said, perhaps I should not like him a second time for a partner," said Grace.

"So you did," replied Emily, a little checked, "and I must say it shows a good deal of discernment. I did not like him, but then it was partly because he was like some one I dislike, and partly out of spite and prejudice to the Duffs."

"And you own your motives," cried Grace, laughing, "out of spite to me!"

"Well, I am not so utterly blinded by spite and prejudice as to deny all good to this incognito," returned Emily; "do you know, he bore that rude speech of mine, which Constance was so hardened as to repeat the other day, with such temper and mildness, that I have been reproaching myself ever since; but now I see I was quite right, and I do not mean to repent any longer."

"I do wonder you are so surprised," said Grace, "it seems to me so exactly what I should expect; and that makes me so sorry, the Duffs are so intimate with him. How they can like him! though he is so agreeable and clever, he says so many things that are not right! How strange it is!"

"It *is* rather strange that my aunt and Constance, and my uncle should take so to him, certainly," replied Emily, "but I cannot pity them whatever happens, for they will not listen to a word."

"But I do pity Fanny," said Grace, "she has such a taste for the romantic and elegant, and it is so natural for her not to see any thing unfavourable, when all her family have even a higher opinion of him than herself."

"I have talked to Fanny," said Emily, "but she is so silly, one can make no impression at all. One minute she persists all is my fancy, and proves it by appealing to the idea of her family, that he is paying attention to Mary Anne; and the next she falls into raptures, and calls him

her dear Osmond. I really have no patience with her any more than with the rest."

Grace was surprised at this. Fanny had never expressed doubt so far towards herself, and she was also surprised that Fanny had no scruples in talking of Mr. Guppy so openly to Emily. She had before thought it a piece of confidence, especially reserved for herself. She was however greatly relieved at finding that Fanny did not make an exclusive confidant of her.

"If it were fun and nonsense in Fanny," continued Emily, while Grace was making the above reflections, "I should not care, but she has no fun in her. I wish she had."

"Do you ever observe, Emily," said Grace, "how our party differ every hour? You now are wishing Fanny had more fun, and Constance was but just now treating that quality as so harmful."

"Well, I am only sure and certain," cried Emily, "that if Fanny had some sense of the absurd, she would be the best of the sisters—I really think better than Charlotte."

Grace was struck with this remark of Emily's, for she had found herself so constantly at a loss to understand Fanny, and perplexed how to treat her, on account of this very deficiency; but if Grace had even been fully aware of the absence of this quality in Fanny, she had never looked upon it as a serious want of character, as Emily's observation seemed to imply.

Grace was ready to return, as she came, behind the formidable horse, but Mrs. Ward would not allow it, and Campbell was George's companion. Perhaps they talked of the Fairy Bower and six years back; perhaps of Frank Freeman and six years forward; perhaps, of Mr. Guppy and the present moment; but very likely of none.

On their return, both families found Frank Freeman's P.P.C. cards; and Campbell hastened to his friend, who took his departure the next morning.

CHAPTER IV.

Why what's the matter ?

Shakspeare.

THE next day was Friday, and brought letters from Langham, announcing the arrival of the travellers, as well as continued good accounts of Mrs. Ward. If all went on well, it was settled that Ellen was to leave Langham in about ten days, and finish her home visit, on the return of the family to Fulham. This was a very agreeable idea ; but at the same time, together with the certainty that neither Mrs. Leslie nor Ellen would return, it gave a last stroke to any further enjoyment of the Hastings visit. Indeed, it was very plain the party was broken up ; and it was felt by most, perhaps not by Fanny, that the last day's spirit was a mere flickering flame, still living amid the embers of what was past and gone. It was not merely the loss of three members of their party,—for though Mr. Ward went backwards and forwards to London, he completed the society, and his absence was felt as a loss—but Grace also was very much withdrawn from the Wards ; and the admission of a stranger among the Duffs, on such intimate terms, was an additional bar to intercourse on the side of both families. It is true, all went together to Winchelsea, and a meeting or two took place between them on the morning before ; but this was almost all that had occurred after Mrs. Leslie's departure, and it seemed very probable that the daily and hourly meetings of the two families, or some individuals of them, would not be revived. One cause was, the loss of Mrs. Leslie's quiet insensible influence. By some means, no one knew what,

and few observed it, but, by some means, she acted as a sort of neutral atmosphere, between the two sisters. Every plan of pleasure, as well as every subject under discussion, had to be modelled and revised by her ; and all prospered in the end under her hand. It was something the same with Ellen among the junior branches. The Duffs *felt*, more than allowed, a seriousness about Ellen that extended itself to those whom, in her absence, they lightly esteemed. But, after all, the stranger, and the monopoly of Grace, were the grand reasons that the party did not make the best of their circumstances, and enjoy themselves in some degree as before.

Grace, also, this morning, had a letter from her mamma. She had very rarely had such a thing, so seldom were they separated, and it was very delightful to her. She liked to think that her mother had sat down, and given an hour, at least, entirely to her ; and, almost with tears, she followed the well-known lines of her hand-writing. Mrs. Leslie repeated much of Mr. Ward's letter, but added, that Mrs. Ward wished her to remain as long as she could ; in fact, till the invalid felt herself strong enough to see Grace there ; that it had been Mrs. Ward's plan, before her illness, to ask Mrs. Leslie and Grace to accompany Ellen back to Langham, where she meant to have made all the business arrangements with Mrs. Leslie, on Ellen's guardianship. These were now being concerted ; but as Mrs. Leslie agreed to stay, they were not to be executed as speedily as was at first intended. The plan was, that after Grace's week at the Duffs', she was to join Ellen at the Wards', at Fulham ; and, when summoned, both were to go down together to Langham, on the visit before talked of. No scheme could be to Grace more complete and delightful. Her present anticipations quite eclipsed her former ones, on the Hastings expedition. Among other prospects, she thought of the probability of becoming acquainted with

Mrs. Ward's friends, the clergyman and his wife, of whom Ellen could talk all day and all night.

This Friday was an eventful day ; though a dull one, to most, if not to all, the party. Perhaps transcribing a part of Grace's letter to her mamma will be the simplest plan of relation. It was begun on Friday, but kept in hand for a couple of days, as she was in no haste to send it, having written the day before to her mamma.

Perhaps also the reader will like to see Grace's notice of her adventure with George and the noble horse, since it was a rather difficult matter to relate. Grace felt it so. She was afraid of George being blamed, yet did not like not to avow the happy escape they had had. After an account of their proceedings, &c., she continued :—

“George had got a gig, with a beautiful gentle-looking horse, though he was very tall. You know my old fancy for handsome horses and a quick pace, and certainly we had both. I cannot guess how many miles an hour we went, and George would not tell me, for the fact was, the horse at last went faster than either of us wished. If the idea of danger had not come into my head, and if I had not thought so much of you, I should have enjoyed it—the pace was so even and delightful, particularly when he kept to his magnificent trot : but as it was, it seemed hardly right to enjoy what might have ended so seriously ; and, of course, when I thought of the danger, I felt more thankfulness than pleasure, every bound. However, all ended happily ; the horse stopped of himself, and was as gentle as a lamb the rest of the way. I quite pitied the noble creature all the time, for it was nothing but a paroxysm of harmless terror that seized him, and the only danger was, the chance of our meeting any obstruction. George managed most skilfully, and was very considerate and kind ; I never liked him so well.

I hope you will approve what has been done about Jessie.

Hanson was quite satisfied about the family: she said it was enough if one knew a family was tolerably quiet, and would allow a servant 'to keep to her church;' that young girls should not be too 'particular,' and 'pick and choose,' but take what promises fair; and that she considered Mrs. Childe's, just the place for Jessie. I dare say Hanson's advice is good and sensible, but I, in my inexperience, should have been more 'particular,' if it were left quite to me; I am glad, however, it is not. Mrs. Childe wants Jessie immediately, so she is to go to-morrow, as I can do very well without her.....*Night.*—We seem altogether in a maze. Mr. Guppy has been here all day long, and that makes a great difference; for the Wards do not like him, and I do not think they will come much if he remains. I have not seen Emily all day, except just now, when she ran over to tell us that George means to go to London to-morrow. She says he finds as much fault with Hastings as he did at first, and calls it the stupidest place in the world; so he intends to go and get through his reading by the time Ellen comes to Fulham; and certainly I shall like that better, for I am tired of excursions here. However, I am pretty sure poor Mr. Guppy sends George away. He seems to have no idea the Wards do not like him, and yet I cannot believe him so stupid as not to guess. I cannot say I like him better than I did, but the Duffs think very differently indeed;—I do very much wonder at them. I cannot understand how it is such a clever, judicious, penetrating person as Constance, does not see things which even I see; but she is an ardent friend, and has taken him quite for granted, and so is quite as much blinded as Fanny. It is not kindness in her, like my aunt William, who sees no faults in any body, because Constance does see some people's faults very plain indeed; but I suppose original minds and characters must be inconsistent, or must seem

so to others. I do not mean inconsistent in conduct, but in tendencies and feelings.....

Saturday morning.—I am obliged to write in great haste to-day, to tell you of all the changes. Mr. Guppy came in this morning, as he always does at breakfast, but his visit to-day was of quite a different class from usual. He had just had a letter, which summoned him away on the most important business ; he did not say what, but he seemed concerned and excited ; and I felt more sorry for him than I have done before, because I cannot help thinking he was grieved on Fanny's account. Yet, I am very much vexed with both Fanny and Mary Anne too, in different ways. I cannot think how they could do as they have done. However, the end of it is, that we are all—I mean the Duff party—to leave Hastings to-day, and return to Winterton. The Wards wish me to come to them for the remaining week, which I should like very much ; but as you put me in charge of the Duffs, and as I was to go there for a week, and as Jessie also happens to be leaving, I hope you think me right to follow the movements of the Duffs. I certainly should prefer staying with Emily, who is alone now, and wishes it, but the Duffs make such a point of my going with them that I do not like to refuse. They hire a stage-coach, as they did coming down, and Campbell is gone about it. Jessie is to go with us, as she had not yet set off. All my things are packed, and she is now taking my place, helping Charlotte, else I could not write so much to you, for the Duff servants have more to do than they can get through, and all the rest are out but Mrs. Duff and Charlotte. I send the rest of our things to Cadogan Place, by wagon ;—I hope that is right."

Grace's letter gives all the facts, yet it may be as well to throw some light upon her remarks. Mr. Guppy's news at the breakfast table threw a visible damp over all the party, each individual of whom, almost, did him the

honour in their several ways to express their audible concern at his sudden departure. Mrs. Duff made some enquiries as to his business, if it was in London, &c., mentioned that a young servant was going to her place at Ringtown, and would have to pass through London; if she could take up any letters for him, which at any rate would enable him to stay over the Sunday.

"You know you can do no business on the Sabbath," said Constance.

"And," continued Mary Anne, "if your business is not in London, you will have time for nothing to-night."

"You could set off on Monday morning directly it strikes one," said Fanny, more gently than her sister.

"Twelve, you mean, Fanny," observed Constance, who never let trifling errors pass.

"I would advise your making use of Jessie," said Mrs. Duff, thinking Mr. Guppy moved by their arguments; "it seems a thousand pities not to do so, and quite fortunate there is no post to-night, or I should not have thought of the plan; she can take any letter any where in London, and I would apologize to Mrs. Childe if Jessie cannot get down to-night."

"But, mamma, the Childes were to send to meet her in London," said Constance, "and if she had a letter to take, she could not perhaps get down till Monday."

"Oh, I could write a note, and manage all that," said Mrs. Duff; "Mrs. Childe is so grateful to me for recommending Jessie, that she would not care; besides they cannot want her on Sunday."

Mr. Guppy here made enquiries as to the time Jessie left Hastings, which were received with signs of great joy and hope. He also added, "But I would by no means detain your young servant, so as to prevent her getting to her place to-night. What suburb of London did you say?" added he, in a tone of enquiry.

He was answered, Ringtown.

"Let me see," said he, "that is somewhat less than twenty miles from London."

"Don't you know Ringtown!" exclaimed Mrs. Duff, bursting out laughing at what seemed strange ignorance to her. "Ringtown is within three or four miles of Winterton."

"I beg your pardon," cried Mr. Guppy, colouring at his forgetfulness, "I thought you meant Rington, in Hertfordshire; you mean of course Ringtown Butts."

"No wonder," exclaimed Fanny, in a soft, though audible whisper to any who might be listening; "as if *he* should know any thing of such a vulgar place as Ringtown!"

"That is not very polite, Fanny," observed Constance, "when you know we are acquainted with many there."

"And that is not very consistent, Constance," replied Fanny, smiling archly, "when at other times you dislike politeness."

Constance explained that she used the argument as on Fanny's own principles.

Mary Anne at the same time was continuing a defence of Ringtown. "Besides, Fanny," said she, "you forget that some of Lady Minette's relations live at Ringtown."

"I do not forget," replied Fanny; "but that does not make Ringtown more tolerable. Lady Minette's connexions are not so very fashionable! and those of whom you speak, I know are positively vulgar."

"That is the family where the young men were so wild, is it not, Fanny?" asked her mother. "What has become of them?"

"Oh, I believe they are both dead!" cried Fanny; "I think one was drowned and the other hung, but really I forget."

"Hung, Fanny!—nonsense!" said Mary Anne.

"I think," continued Mr. Guppy, amused at Fanny's

manner, "we should have heard of any relation of Lady Minette's who had been so far distinguished."

"Oh!" cried Fanny, "they are not at all what you think,—quite common people, whom nobody knows. I think Lady Minette's brother was a hosier, and made stockings. You know Lady Minette was nobody herself, and only married a man who was made a knight. She regrets her want of birth exceedingly."

"The remains of the old leaven," observed Constance.

Mr. Duff however, who, though present, had not before spoken, except once, to regret Mr. Guppy's departure, would not allow Fanny's assertion about Lady Minette's nephew so to pass. He said seriously, "It was a grave occasion—it was a disgraceful thing—a very disgraceful thing, for any one to come to the gallows; much more for any one so highly connected;" and he rebuked his daughter for so lightly spreading such a report.

"Oh, papa," said Fanny, "nobody hears me! and I am sure—at least, almost sure—that Lady Minette said so, one day. I know she either said he was hung, or would be, or deserved to be hung; and I know I hoped the first, because I was rejoiced that there was an end of him, for poor Lady Minette made herself cross, and worried me to death with these two nephews of hers; and I am sure they must be dead, or transported, because I never hear of them now. —Besides," continued she, "they looked as if they would be hung some day—such black, low-browed, ugly little men; and with such names, too! Zedekiah or Zephaniah, I forget which—for Lady Minette always called them 'my youngest nephew,' and 'my eldest nephew.'"

Fanny gave the tone certainly a turn of Lady Minette's pronunciation. She had no great powers of mimicry, but sometimes could just hit off such an imitation as this. Her sisters all laughed, and Mr. Guppy caught the infection. Her mother here checked her, in order to settle Mr. Gup-

py's plans, for it was now within half an hour of the time of Jessie's departure.

Mr. Guppy considered, and seemed exceedingly desirous of availing himself of the proposal ; but his consideration was in vain, he found it was altogether quite impossible to arrange any thing in the time. With much concern, then, he declined the proposal, and proceeded to take leave of his kind friends. Many times and plans were spoken of for meeting again, at Winterton, which he received with much gratitude, and said he should ever be too happy, as well as too proud, to obey their summons, if duty did not interfere ; and that he trusted that would not *always* stand in the way. So saying, he took as rapid a farewell as his kind friends would permit, and retreated to his lodgings.

CHAPTER V.

Men at some time are masters of their fate.

Shakspeare.

"AND he is gone !" cried Fanny, clasping her hands ; "how dull every thing will be now. I am sure I wish we were going away this very hour !"

"And I am sure I do !" continued Mary Anne, "every body is gone ! and Osmond Guppy is a much greater loss than all the rest together—every body must say that. I never saw a quiet person amusing before ; he is not like George—so boisterous !"

"Oh," cried Grace, "you must not call George boisterous now, you are thinking of him when he was a boy."

"Grace defends George with a pun," observed Fanny, *en passant*.

"You may like George, Grace, if you please," said Mary Anne, "and I may like Osmond Guppy, I suppose."

"He has a great deal of quiet wit, extraordinary penetration in character, and deep observation on the world," remarked Constance, "and it is a delight to think, that wearied with its pleasures and vanities, he has at length given it up. We do not often see young men of his talents, turn to religion. Clever men puffed off by learning or genius generally scoff at all serious things."

"Such cleverness would not be skin deep, Constance," observed Campbell.

"We know that very well," replied his sister, "no learning is really good for any thing except sanctified by grace."

"Then why sigh, Constance, as you so often do, after what you call genius or talents unsanctified; Lord Byron's for instance."

"Because I consider if one of Lord Byron's genius were a Christian, what a testimony it would be to the truth of religion!"

"Constance," said her brother, "I feel quite ashamed of such a sentiment. As if any man's testimony could be an honour to religion! You surely cannot consider what you say."

Constance, after a little argument of her own, had recourse in this instance to authority to support her opinion; she quoted fluently passages from several of her favourite preachers or writers. Campbell said that she could add greater names than those to her side of the question, but, that like an obstinate young gentleman, he was of the same opinion still. Grace was for and against, traced their argument, and thought she should have taken up another aspect of it, (for she was alternately on each side;) but she made a point of never interfering in *tête-a-tête* arguments, however public, except appealed to, or except she knew

that one of the parties wished it. Neither was the case at present. She was however always glad if there was an opportunity of following up such discussions with either Campbell or Constance apart, and now such an one occurred ; for the former appealed to her, while the latter turned to her mother and sisters in earnest consultation.

"You do not agree with me, I know, Grace," said Campbell, "you think me hard on Lord Byron."

"I do not know that I think you hard on him as he actually was," replied Grace ; "but I always fancy that his mind had received a jar and was out of tune, that religion would have set it right in one moment, and that that was all he wanted."

"So it is all that every one wants."

"Yes, I knew you would say that," replied Grace, "but my idea is, that his mind, as it were, had a religious framework, and that the corresponding works had got out of place. One impulse would set all in order, I thought—but it is quite a fancy of mine, and perhaps there was no stronger bias towards religion in him, than in others of the same principles."

"It is a fancy, depend upon it," said Campbell, "and the most sensible part of your notion is, the last retracting words. He had the power of retaining and representing feelings in words, and so has the power of mystifying those who look to words more than substantial acts. I would not say any thing severe of one who is so lately gone ; but his character and life have been long public property ; and where all the world, even religious people, admire and excuse ; those who differ, seem called upon to speak more strongly."

"Do you think," asked Grace, after a pause, "that circumstances have a great deal to do with forming a person's character?"

"In one sense they are every thing, in another nothing,"

said Campbell ; "circumstances must be a medium, and for a time seem paramount, but the character of each individual must in the end, appear, for good or evil, through circumstances ; however prosperous or adverse they may have been to its formation."

"As a bee gathers her honey equally from flowers, weeds, and even poison, you mean ?" asked Grace.

"Exactly," replied Campbell, pleased to have his notion so readily illustrated.

"I am glad you think so," observed Grace, "for I never like to hear people say, such an one would have been very different under more advantageous circumstances ; and yet the opinion is so very common, that I always think I am wrong, if I differ."

"Just as all the world is saying now of this same Lord Byron," remarked Campbell, "that all his false principles and feelings are owing to his circumstances. Some trace all his faults to his mother's severe and unkind character, some to his early disappointment, and some even to his personal infirmity."

"I have often thought how strange it is," observed Grace, "that both our great modern poets are lame, and that the affliction was the cause of bitter melancholy to the one, and (they say) of joyous activity and emulation to the other."

"And to pursue your remarks," continued Campbell, "both suffered from the second trial I mentioned, disappointment in early years. But how differently again they bore the affliction."

"Yet," continued Grace, after some consideration, "such causes must have a great influence on a person's character. What a dreadful thing it must be to have a severe or imperious mother ! I think people must die, or become something quite unnatural ; I do pity him for that."

"I should not at all wonder," said Campbell, smiling at Grace's horror, "if the son in this case could be as morose and irritating, as the mother was violent and tyrannical; and if so, you must not bestow too much of so precious a thing as pity. Suppose the son were obedient and mild in such a case, instead of haughty and reserved?"

"Of course things would be quite different," said Grace; "but then youths of that character do not consider so deeply. And indeed some people talk of all young gentlemen of that age, as if they were wild animals, and to be guided by nothing but a sort of happy chance."

"It is true the 'happy chance' is fixed and firm principle, or in other words, religion," replied Campbell, "and it is true that many—most, one must say—miss of this happy chance; but that makes their choice, not their circumstances to blame. Imagine a youth, taking only one trial aright, such as any of the real trials we mentioned, and you will follow him one step after another out of his difficulties and temptations, till you find him fairly started in a religious course."

Here was a pause. Grace was thinking with warmth, "what a nice good fellow Campbell is!" When the congress of the rest of the party broke up, Fanny came behind her brother, and laying her hand on his arm, exclaimed, "Come, good creatures!—jump up—leave off talking—and you, Campbell, go pack up your books as fast as you can!"

"What do you mean?" exclaimed her brother, seeing by the excitement of the rest of the party that something extraordinary was going on.

"Why we are going to leave Hastings this very moment!" continued Fanny, in high glee, "so, up—up, Campbell, and do not stare about so wildly, as if you were in a dream."

CHAPTER VI.

Up with a sally, and a flash of speed,
As if they scorned both resting-place and rest.

Wordsworth.

FANNY'S news, as Grace's letter has already explained, was correct enough, and is as easily understood as related. The steps, however, by which this decision had been arrived at, require some detail.

The three daughters, for different reasons, all desired this arrangement, and set upon their mother to persuade her to consent to their wishes. Now it happened that Mrs. Duff had no objection herself to the plan. At this time of the year, she always had her house painted, and partially new furnished, and she had been some days becoming uneasy on considering the progress that must have been made towards hanging the new drawing-room curtains. She had much repented allowing this to be finished in her absence, since, as every housekeeper knows, upholsterers and carpenters are the stupidest people in the world, and there was sure to be some irremediable blunder, in spite of all her verbal orders, and written directions; perhaps, after all, she should find the curtains hung too high; or the new shabby fashion of straight hangings or fringes, which were her abhorrence, substituted for the rich and flowing draperies in which her taste delighted. She had also been considering, that the maids at home would be at a sad loss in the completing of household arrangements, without either North or herself. Half the bed-rooms were new furnished, as usual every year, and the old equipments to be remodelled, and newly set up in the other rooms. This last week was a precious one for

all these finishing touches ; the comfort of a whole year depended upon their being well done. There were besides, a hundred other matters to be solicitous about. It was a very early year for fruit, and there was no time to be lost about the preserves. She had left her book of receipts at home, in case of such an emergency ; but, without herself or North, it was not likely matters of this kind would go on as usual. She remarked to her daughters, that their papa also would be glad to leave Hastings at once, for he was going up to London early on Monday morning, and had been talking of not returning again. Every thing, therefore, seemed to conspire, to render this sudden step desirable.

But there was one grand obstacle, and this was the house at Hastings. They had taken it for a month, and Mrs. Duff could not consent to lose the week's rent. Certainly, there was besides, a considerable portion of the stores, still unconsumed, in the store-room ; but, as she justly observed, these could go back, and it would only be the expense of carriage, whereas the rent would be a dead loss.

None of the above arguments *for* the move escaped the quick wits of the young ladies, who forestalled their mother in each item, and added many of minor importance, not worth relating. The grand and almost sole objection—the week's rent—they combatted with any arguments at hand, more ingenious, perhaps, than sound. As they talked, a message was brought in, that their landlady, Mrs. White, had called, and wished to speak to Mrs. Duff, who desired her to be admitted. The object of the call was to ask if Mrs. Duff could be so kind as to say if it was likely that she should want the house after the next week, as a family were wishing to take it for three months, and were willing to be disposed of elsewhere for a week, but no longer.

Mrs. Duff welcomed the happy opening, and enquired if it would be any accommodation to her landlady and the family, to have possession of the house earlier than the end of the month agreed upon.

The reply was, that even one day would be a great favour, since Hastings was so full, that Mrs. White had to quarter the family in different houses, very inconveniently. They were willing to put up with this discomfort for as long as a week, since they had been at her house before, were particularly pleased with it, and wished to have it again.

Great then was the joy of all standing by, to hear Mrs. Duff make the offer of immediate possession to Mrs. White ; of course on the understanding of having occupied the house only three weeks. In a few minutes the landlady withdrew with grateful speed to communicate the agreeable tidings to her patient tenants.

Great was now the excitement of those left behind. Constance flew for her bonnet, in order to take leave of some of her intimates, and make certain arrangements on a matter, which in fact was the principal cause of her willingness to leave Hastings, or rather to return home ; and the rest entered into a rapid discussion of arrangements.

A sudden affair of this kind, giving scope for exertion of body and promptness of decision, was exactly the field for Mrs. Duff. Her very heart and soul rejoiced in such scenes. Some of her friends had said, perhaps with as much satire as truth, that if Mrs. Duff could only be in a bustle, it scarcely mattered whether the occasion was a wedding, funeral, or runaway match ; but as none of these events had ever happened in her own family, this must have been in a great degree a matter of pure conjecture.

In one moment the house was in the full activity of joyous confusion ;—the bell was rung—the maids were all set at work—Jessie was stopped from her journey—Camp-

bell was despatched to hire a coach—the children were called together—and Mr. Duff, who had gathered what was about to happen, went for his hat, and quietly walked out of the house. He looked at his watch as he passed his imploring daughters, and assured them that he would be back in one minute less than an hour. Campbell had not departed on his mission without some representations on his part. First, he protested that he had not been consulted in this move.

“Nonsense, Campbell!” said Mary Anne, “you can read any where, and you said you did not care about coming at all.”

“At any rate, you might ask what Grace has to say to such an abrupt departure.”

“Grace of course has no opinion in the matter,” said his mother; “she will go with us, and visit us only a week earlier than was before settled. Besides it will save her mother the expenses here for a week, which will be an advantage and an object to Mrs. Leslie.”

Grace was ashamed to have been mentioned as any obstacle to plans of the Duffs. Campbell however continued his pleas. The Wards were his next point:—What would they say about Grace? and also on the defection of so many members of the party?—He did not think it fair.

“Campbell, you are very tiresome,” said Mary Anne, “it is all settled now, so there is no use in talking. George chose to go away, and nobody talked of defection then. Besides Emily is the only one of the Wards left, so that it cannot signify much.”

There was something amusing in the mixture of truth and error in this view of Mary Anne’s, seeing that numerically there were still twelve individuals in the Wards’ house, while Emily was the only one she at the moment thought there was need to recognize. Campbell, however, persisted in going to the Wards, before he engaged the coach.

CHAPTER VII.

We have bid them all farewell.

Felicia Hemans.

"Oh, how I wish we could stay till Monday!" sighed Charlotte; "such a bustle, all for nothing! and we shall get home—nobody expecting us, and nothing prepared—to-morrow Sunday, too! I do wonder at you all liking this plan."

"Why, we choose between evils," said Mary Anne; "we none of us *like*, I suppose, to get home and find nothing to eat, and to-morrow, as you say, Sunday; but I really did not think of that part, and the thing is settled."

"But could we not stay till Monday, Mary Anne?" continued Charlotte; "I think perhaps mamma does not remember these things, and Constance too; I think she forgets to-night is Saturday; she will not like to travel."

"I know very well, Charlotte, mamma will not stay till Monday, with the chance of paying the whole week's rent; and, as for Constance, I shall say nothing; you may if you please. I think her particularity about Saturday, is quite silly enough, without my making it worse."

Thus foiled, Charlotte set quietly about her share in the packing arrangements.

"Oh, Fanny," cried Mary Anne, as she sat down to the desk, "what a nuisance to have to write this note to Osmond Guppy; I don't know what to say. Constance was so tiresome, to run off in that way; she never cares whom she inconveniences. What shall I say?"

"Well, let me write it," cried Fanny, readily.

"Well, do; it cannot signify who writes it," replied

Mary Anne. "But stay," added she, again seating herself, "it might seem strange your writing, and not Constance; I think I had better write; besides mamma told me."

Mary Anne attempted to begin, but was arrested at the very onset; she did not know how to address the gentleman whom, occasionally, they had called Osmond, and Osmond Guppy. "So formal," said she, "to say, 'Dear Sir,' or, 'Dear Mr. Guppy.'"

"Oh, for pity's sake, not 'Dear Mr. Guppy,'" cried Fanny, imploringly; "let me write."

"What shall I say, Grace?" asked Mary Anne, "do you write notes for your mamma?"

"Never, I think," said Grace.

"Well, but then, what would you say, if you had to write this?"

"I really don't know what you have to write about," replied Grace.

"Oh, did you not hear? We are going to ask Mr. Guppy if we cannot take him to London by our coach."

"Oh, are you?" cried Grace, in her very expressive tone of disappointment.

"Well, why not?" asked Mary Anne, looking up. "Do you think we shall be too many? North, you know, does not go till Monday; she stays to pack up the grocery, and things in the store-room; so we are only sixteen altogether; papa and mamma, we four and Campbell, the four children and two nursery maids, Jessie, you and the driver; the children make one additional place, which mamma thought was very handy for Osmond Guppy."

"Oh, yes!" cried Fanny, "and perhaps we shall hear what his dear mysterious business is, before we get home; and perhaps he will sleep at Winterton, and spend to-morrow there!"

"Well, Grace, what would you say?" said Mary Anne, looking up with the pen in her hand.

"Oh, I should say nothing at all," said Grace, laughing.

"But if your mamma desired you?" said Mary Anne, who did not very often use this argument.

"Why I should say," continued Grace, in the same tone, "please, mamma, pray write yourself."

"Ah, but my mamma is not your mamma," said Mary Anne.

Grace was sorry to have occasioned this speech; and, to make amends, she said, "Well, if I were you, I would write, 'Mrs. Duff's compliments to Mr. Guppy, &c.'"

"Oh, no; that is so formal: mamma never writes so to any one," said Mary Anne; "and we are so intimate with him."

"He would understand how it is," cried Grace, carelessly; "he would know how engaged your mamma must be at this moment, and that one of you had written."

"I am sure I wish you were not writing at all!" said Charlotte, who was packing up work and drawing boxes, "I hoped all the time that Mr. Guppy would be gone, and would not know that we were leaving Hastings."

"And why?" asked Mary Anne.

"Because I had rather not," replied Charlotte.

"That is a woman's reason," said Mary Anne, disdainfully.

"Well, Mary Anne, a woman's reason is the best in the world," said Grace, laughing, "and I am quite of Charlotte's opinion. Why will you write to Mr. Guppy?"

"Because mamma told me."

"But you know, Mary Anne," said Charlotte, "she would not have cared at first, if you had a little objected."

"At first!" cried Mary Anne, "I know nothing about that—besides, that is past, and now time is getting on."

Grace actually had been hoping Mr. Guppy might in the delay be off.

"Oh, how I wish I could speak to him, instead of writing!" exclaimed Mary Anne, presently.

Fanny fervently echoed the wish; and in a few moments the sisters had agreed to go together to his lodging, with a message, instead of a note.

Grace, by this time, had felt somewhat implicated in their proceedings; also, she was emboldened by seeing that Charlotte was of her way of thinking; she, therefore, stoutly protested against their going without asking their mother. This, she considered, would at once settle the question. "It is much worse to call," said she, "than to write; though I do not like that."

"I cannot think why you object so," said Mary Anne; "you cannot dislike Osmond Guppy."

"I only think it too great a compliment to him altogether," replied Grace, laughing.

"Oh, Grace, you are so formal!" exclaimed Mary Anne; "we never think of compliments, and all that stuff: however, I will go and ask mamma, and you will hear what she says."

Mary Anne knew sometimes how to manage her mamma, and the present was one of these propitious times. She knew her mother would be absorbed with business and directions, and would answer quickly, if the question were properly worded and accented, "Oh, yes, my dear; *much* better call and speak, it will save time."

It was exactly so. The young ladies, therefore, left the house in high glee; and Grace sighed at the absence of Constance.

Emily came over in a short time, incited by Campbell's report; but it was not much worth while expending her wrath on the most passive of the party—Charlotte and Grace—one of whom was industriously gathering together, and packing, all the personals of her sisters; the other, up-stairs, superintending Jessie's packing, and gathering

together her scattered property. Emily had considered it wise, to make no serious opposition to the Duffs' plans; but she told Campbell she should certainly tell his sisters what she thought of their conduct. Before very long, her two cousins returned. "What is all this about?" cried she; for neither Campbell nor Charlotte had satisfied her as to the cause of the sudden move; "why are you going off in such a hurry?"

"Oh," cried Fanny, "did not Campbell tell you? Osmond Guppy is going away, so we can stay no longer!"

"Nonsense, Fanny!" exclaimed Emily, laughing, "really you get more absurd every day.—What is it," continued she, to Mary Anne, "Campbell said that you would explain, for that he could not understand ladies' reasons; and if Fanny's were a true one," added she, with her peculiar smothered laugh, "I should respect Campbell's caution, instead of laughing at it as I did."

"Well, it *is* true," said Mary Anne, "however you may choose to jest upon it."

Mary Anne spoke in pique. Emily knew her cousin too well to doubt for a moment. She saw she was in earnest. Moved she must have been, for her smiles in a moment gave way to a very grave expression, and even the bright colour on her cheek seemed somewhat to fade.

"How have you got my aunt to consent?" exclaimed Emily.

"Got!" cried Mary Anne, "mamma wished it as much as we."

"Well, Mary Anne," said Emily, "I came over to scold you, and to tell you I thought your conduct to us very shabby, but I am too ashamed now to take the thing in that way."

More was said about Grace. Mrs. Ward also had gone up-stairs to her sister, to expostulate on all accounts; but all her representations had no effect, and the Duffs were

allowed to carry away Grace, on condition of their letting her come to meet Ellen at Fulham, when summoned—most likely on the Monday week.

The result of the mission of the Miss Duffs to Mr. Guppy was in the main unsuccessful. His reply was, that he should take a devious course ; that he was not going immediately to London, but should post after the first stage. But this was said with expressions of deep gratitude at their kindness, and regret at his inability to avail himself of it. The young ladies were highly gratified with the visit, which the more they discussed, the less they repented. Grace still thought it sounded inopportune. Mr. Guppy, it seems, was surrounded by packets of papers, and full of business. His landlady came in several times with messages about bills, and the time of the coaches starting ; and he was in great haste to be off. Each of the young ladies devised several schemes for his accommodation :—among others, suggested taking him as far as their routes coincided ; but Mr. Guppy's plans seemed quite out of the reach of any assistance they could afford him.

"I dare say he is going to be married," said Mary Anne to her sister, as they walked away from his lodgings.

"That is not very likely," returned Fanny.

"I do not see why it is not very likely," continued Mary Anne ; "people are always close when they are going to be married, and you know he has not let out one word about his business. I saw too the direction to the letter he was beginning when we came in. It was to Lady Something, he had not written the name ; but he looked at us and the letter, and presently put it out of sight. I dare say he is going to marry this Lady Something. Besides I think he coloured when he said 'important business ;' people always colour at such times."

"Yes, I know he coloured," replied Fanny.

On their arrival at home, they found all in bustle and

commotion. Every body was running about, yet every body seemed packing. Charlotte was still busy in the dining-room, and Jessie was helping her. Just at this moment Clara Ward ran in, looking rather wild, with her bonnet scarcely on her head, and holding the strings in her hand. On the other arm hung a basket. "Where is Constance?" cried she.

"Oh, Constance will not be here till the last moment," said Mary Anne, "she is very busily engaged in very important matters;" and as she was going up-stairs, she offered to take charge of the basket, which she recognized as one of Constance's tract baskets, and guessed Clara wished to restore it.

"No, no," said Clara, "I must return all to Constance herself. Besides, look here! I have found her keys; she will be so glad. They were at the bottom of the basket of tracts she lent me."

"Just in time, Clara!" exclaimed Charlotte; "we have been in great distress for Constance's keys; will you please lock her dressing-case and the desk Jessie is just finishing?"

Clara very readily obeyed, and proceeded to lend her assistance, which was valuable, in every little service that could be devised, regardless of the raillery of her cousins and sister every now and then, on her still bearing the precious basket on her arm.

At last all was ready—the coach at the door—half the travellers seated, and no Constance! Every body however was sure that Constance would not be a defaulter, and it wanted two minutes of the appointed time. In a few seconds Constance appeared in sight, and in less than one minute her foot was on the step in order to ascend the vehicle. "Stop! stop! Constance," cried Clara, who had been anxiously waiting to deliver her painful loan, "here are your tracts, your basket—and, look! I have found your keys."

Constance with much satisfaction received the articles, and was again about to ascend to her seat, when Clara interposed, and insisted on counting the tracts. A little conversation passed between them on the numbers. Clara seemed very eager to prove some point, while Emily stood by laughing at both of them, and calling her sister the very type of a little old maid. Clara's accuracy was favoured by some change being found necessary in the luggage; and by this means Constance also was enabled to give a few parting injunctions to North, and to take leave of her aunt and cousins, who were all congregated in or about the house. Thus, in less than two hours from the moment the grand decision was made, the trunks were packed, the bills paid, the farewells said, the coach peopled, and the whole Duff branch of our Hastings party, except North and the contents of the store-room, on their way to Winterton.

CHAPTER VIII.

All's well that ends well.

Shakspeare.

GRACE had exceedingly enjoyed the bustle of departure. It was a new scene to her, and she had never been in such a one. She was used to very quiet, though very active ways, and found this a specimen of quite a new order of minds. She wondered how people could show so much feeling about trifles, and debate so earnestly, matters, which would cost her but a single thought. But she admired the simplicity and energy of her friends, and she wished she was not of the sober and calculating disposition she knew herself to be. Grace was able to cast a poetry of her own around all things; and youth, animation, and the good

humour which sudden activity calls forth, when all are united for one purpose, threw a glow of feeling over the Duffs, which showed them in a brighter point of view to Grace than ever before ; that is, as a family, for as individuals Grace liked some, and knew she ought to like all ; indeed she believed she did. North also was in a good humour. The scheme had satisfied her ; for Mr. Badcock's last sermon at Hastings was the following day, and she did not care how soon after that she left. North's good humour was a most important point in the family. There could not have been the talking and laughing there was without it. Even her mistress could not act at ease without North's full approbation. No doubt therefore it assisted the new manifestation of good humour which Grace had perceived and enjoyed.

Probably if circumstances had not conspired to bring all wishes to a point in one moment, if there had been a leisure space for reflection, Mrs. Duff at least, if not some of the daughters, would have judged differently as to so sudden a movement. But all were as though distraught, seized with a mania to get away from present sights and sounds ; and all felt as though they were flying instead, into some fair and joyous paradise ; whereas they were journeying on a hot day in an inconvenient vehicle, to an empty and almost unfurnished house, with no sort of requital at the end of the day ; perhaps, under the peculiar circumstances of the house, not even that solace which seems to come to mortals of a certain rank as surely as the darkness, "a comfortable room and a well-aired bed." The first hour or two Mrs. Duff was too proud and elated with the late achievement of herself and household, to think upon any thing else, but as her thoughts turned to the end of their journey, the evils that awaited them began to dawn upon her mind, and it was very clear that the youngest and least esteemed of the party, had had more forethought than

the acting powers. But Charlotte was not at hand to enjoy any triumph ; for some had to sit in the basket, and she was one. There had been some difficulty in arranging the party. Mr. Duff always travelled inside a coach, and of course his wife. Mary Anne was afraid of the basket. Fanny would not go outside. Constance would not go in. Charlotte never chose her own place any where, and Grace was equally passive. But Grace in her heart rejoiced at its being decided, ' it was too hot a day for five inside ; that as Grace Leslie had such nerves, she might just as well travel outside as in.' Grace's companions then at first were Constance, Charlotte, and the children ; but Campbell, after the plans were disposed of, interfered so far as to displace two of the children, and sit with the young ladies instead of the servants in front ; for his brother, Master James, liked the box, and Campbell did not care to dispute the seat of honour, with one who generally succeeded in his fancies. Besides, there might be some truth in what James suggested of his brother, that ' he preferred ladies to horses.'

" No wonder," observed Mary Anne, " for Campbell is so blind he could not see the leaders."

" I hope you have none of you left any thing behind," said Campbell, after he was seated.

" If we have," said Constance, " it is Charlotte's fault, or mamma's, or the servants', for they were the packers, and undertook every thing."

" And Grace," added Campbell, maliciously, " for I saw her packing all your work-box, Constance."

" Not my work-box," replied Constance, " in correction, nobody could pack that, for I had lost my keys."

" Well, it was some box of yours I know, for Grace was giving some particular orders about Miss Constance's box to Jessie, as I came back from ordering the coach."

" Did Jessie pack my things?" asked Constance.

"They would not have been ready otherwise," said Charlotte; "Grace particularly wanted to finish a letter, and had been helping me to the last moment. Jessie happened to come in, and was disengaged; so I asked Grace if Jessie might help me."

"I am sure I wish you had not," returned Constance, who did not in the least seem to realize the urgency of the crisis, and the value of an additional hand.

"Jessie is a very handy and careful packer indeed, Constance," replied Charlotte, "I am sure you need not fear any thing being injured in your boxes."

"Oh, I did not think of that!" said Constance, and other subjects were discussed.

Grace enjoyed this journey excessively, and wondered the outside of a carriage was not the most esteemed part. She quite entered into a certain woman's feelings, who, on some noisy debate with a fellow-traveller, exclaimed, "Lack-a-day! you rude fellow! Look ye, the very inside passengers put out their heads to see you!" So superior did she feel.

They dined and took tea upon the road, which was more necessary than usual, since probably the larder at Winterton would be empty, and the servants gone to bed. Mrs. Duff anticipated divers little pieces of indiscretion or disobedience, in which she might surprise the servants left at home. But all seemed dull and quiet enough when they drove up to the house late at night. Charlotte's anticipations and her mother's later fears, however, were justified by the event. The servants had to be knocked up, as all had long since gone to bed. The summons of their coachman was at length answered by a maid, who, in great alarm peered out from an upper window. The sensation may be imagined which an unexpected ingress of fourteen members of a family must occasion; and, as usually happens on such emergencies, every thing was unfortunate.

However, difficulties only gave exercise to Mrs. Duff's inexhaustible powers of contrivance, and by three o'clock in the morning all the party were—some happy few, upon beds and bedsteads, some upon sofas, some upon boxes, and some upon the floor—consigned to repose.

To some the idea of a family of twenty or more existing in the discomfort of an empty house and empty larder, might give little concern ; but Mrs. Duff was not one of this class ; and, as we see faculties happily adjusted to capabilities of endurance, so it was in this case. If Mrs. Duff felt the privations or discomforts of her household more keenly as a personal matter than others, she possessed powers within herself, for their removal or alleviation. Thus, before the sun was fairly risen, after she retired to her late repose, she had laid her plans for the catering of her family for the next day (which, to add to the difficulty, was Sunday ;) and as many besides, as the localities of Winterton required. She was surrounded by neighbours, and she well knew the strong and weak points in their domestic economy. She knew whom to select and whom to avoid in such an emergency :—where the meat was good, abundant, well hung, and well cooked (for, being Sunday, it was the rule of her house never to eat hot meat), where the bread was of the proper age and quality, and where the pastry was wholesome, and of the most delicate composition.

To such larders then, the next morning, before breakfast, she despatched her ambassadors ; and none could have suspected any drawbacks or deficiencies in the state of affairs in the kitchen department, at any of the five meals on the Sunday, or the days following. The same could not be said of the state of the rooms or furniture. Campbell, who seemed to make worse of matters than the rest, declared that there was not a room in the house to go into, or, if there was, not a chair to sit down upon, or a table that was not undergoing the operation of the dry-

rubber. He therefore betook himself the next week to the summer-house in the garden, where he sat and read, until covered with winged and other foes ; when he retreated to the house, to vent his complaints upon Charlotte or Grace, or any he could find sympathetic, according to his notions.

CHAPTER IX.

In moderation placing all my glory.

Pope.

THE next day being Sunday, the Duffs fell at once into all their usual habits and engagements, heightened in interest as they were by the wonderment and excitement their sudden appearance would cause, in their several schools and at church. Constance entered into ideas of this nature much more readily than Grace expected, and the short time they were together at breakfast, amused herself with schemes of concealing behind doors, and springing out, or suddenly seizing certain of their friends, who thought them at the moment far away. She followed up such manœuvres by picturing how the Larkins would start with their favourite exclamation, "Oh, dear !" and how the Dawsons would turn and look, and speak as unmoved as if the thing happened every day—"So stupid !" as Constance ended.

"Yes, and William Taylor," continued Mary Anne, "he will be full of his compliments."

"Well, you know I think better of William Taylor than you, Mary Anne," said Constance, in correction ; "I think his heart is very much touched sometimes, and that he is certainly a promising character."

Fanny, like Grace, did not share in these imaginings and remarks ; she was a stranger at home, nearly as much as Grace, and they were conversing together over a collection of sacred poems, a great favourite of Fanny's.

Winterton chapel, which the Duffs frequented, was built and endowed on the modern plan ; the pews being let, and the gift in the hands of trustees. The Duffs' house, called Grove House, was possessed of a pew in the parish church, which none of the family had occupied for many years ; but lately it was considered that Mr. Taylor, the minister of Winterton chapel, either had not progressed with the march of the age, or had even actually retrograded. This being the case, it was not deemed worth while to rent an additional pew for the children, who now, therefore, with their governess, occupied the pew in the church.

Grace, according to the orders of her hostess, accompanied Campbell and Fanny to the chapel. The rest of the family dropped into their pew by instalments. This was the custom of the family, and easily accounted for by the Miss Duffs teaching at different schools. Constance was the last : she came to the door of the pew for a hymn-book ; then, unlike the rest, she retired and sat in the free seats. Grace was annoyed and uncomfortable, as the pew was full, and she felt herself the intruder. After service the young ladies had something to say, or some arrangements to make with their friends, and the party did not meet again till luncheon time, when Constance appeared, accompanied by two young ladies. Grace presently discovered they bore the name of Dawson, which name she had heard mentioned by the Duffs, but could not remember any particular concerning the family.

Constance immediately began discoursing upon the sermon—"I declare," cried she, "I think Mr. Taylor gets worse and worse every time I hear him. I suppose I feel

the contrast more striking after dear Mr. Badcock; he is truly unedifying."

"My dear Constance," said her mother, "I always think you very hard on Mr. Taylor; his discourse to-day I considered very faithful and heart-searching."

"What can you object to, Constance?" asked Mary Anne, "I am sure he spoke against the faults of all the people in his congregation; I traced exactly those he meant to allude to; though, of course, he dwelt most on the formalists—the Jenners and the Medwins."

"All that was very well as far as it went," said Constance, "it is rather his omissions that I complain of; besides, what do you say to such passages as those he now so often puts in his sermons, directly against all spiritual religion?"

"My dear Constance," exclaimed her mother, "you really go a great deal too far! What would Miss Newmarsh say if she heard you talk in this way against Mr. Taylor?"

"I trust I am under bondage to no man, or woman either," said Constance; "I respect Miss Newmarsh, whom I think faithful, according to her light; but I think others more spiritual and advanced."

"You did not always think so, Constance," observed her mother, who was very anxious to draw her daughter again under the influence of her former respected governess.

"When I was a child, I thought as a child," said Constance; "but I think you will say I can prove my point, when I remind you of a passage or two in Mr. Taylor's sermon."

Constance had a good memory for words, and she recited the following passages, her hearers tacitly bearing witness that there were no departures from the spirit, scarcely from the letter, of the extracts. "He was speaking of those," pursued she, "who opposed serious piety,

and he had, as you say, dwelt mainly on the formalist ; after which, he went on, ‘ But the gospel has enemies as formidable, though less suspected, among ourselves. Strange and extravagant notions have found a place among us, and are, at the present moment, agitating the Christian world, and filling the church with anarchy and confusion—notions quite as destructive to the spirit of genuine piety, as the maxims of the worldly-minded, or the dogmas of the formalist. Oh, misguided teachers ! wolves ‘in sheep’s clothing ! blind leaders of the blind ! ye, who seeing, see not ; and hearing, hear not ; whose life is death, and whose light, darkness ! cease !—cease, we pray you, to harass the meek and lowly members of the true flock.’ Then, presently, he added, ‘ And ye, my brethren, listen not to their flattering teaching ; think not religion, temporary excitement, insolent disregard of authority, or haughty boast of spiritual pride.’ At another part, he said of these same teachers, that ‘ they called theirs an illumination of the spirit, but that they were really as blind to Gospel truth as the voluptuary, the worldling, or the formalist.’ Now, every body knows that by these teachers, Mr. Taylor means certain of our dissenting brethren among us, who are the most spiritual-minded Christians in the place ; as well as others, who are taking up the prayerful study of unfulfilled prophecy ; and I ask, what right has Mr. Taylor to denounce such persons, merely because they do not happen to agree with his views ?”

“ My dear Constance,” said Mrs. Duff, “ if they bring disunion and confusion into the church, he is right to warn us : you know we ought to be all one.”

“ But Mr. Taylor will not let us be all one, mamma,” replied Constance, “ if he denounces a large body of believers. We might be one in love, though not in opinion ; besides, what right has he to say so, and so broad and wide are the church boundaries ?—some, members of the

establishment ; some, of this body of dissenters ; some, of that ; but no more,—‘ I withdraw my right hand of fellowship from certain sects, and certain members of sects.’ Can you answer me that ? Where is his rule ? Does he get it from the Bible, or his own head ?”

“ I cannot answer you, Constance,” replied her mother, “ I am no controversialist ; and I only wish you would not meddle with such subjects, and be so fond of new sects and doctrines.”

“ Nobody can answer it, mamma, I am sure of that,” returned Constance, triumphantly. “ Mr. Taylor is bound, and professes himself bound, to love all who love the Lord Jesus, and to receive them as brethren ; he cannot plead the cold consistency of the high churchman, but is convicted, out of his own mouth, of the most glaring and unblushing inconsistency. Every sermon of his betrays his unsoundness, and it is amazing to me that you all do not see it.”

“ I do see it, Constance,” said Mary Anne, “ and, as you say, I fear he is fast declining into formality and self-righteousness ; it would be an act of Christian charity, for any one to give him a solemn warning.”

“ Then why do you not do it ?” asked one of the Miss Dawsons.

“ Oh, I have no objection,” replied Mary Anne, boldly, “ only Constance has often done so, and he never pays attention.”

“ I am sure he thinks, as I thought till now,” returned the young lady, “ that you, Mary Anne, were his devoted admirer ; I am sure, dear man, he has a great many enemies.”

“ Do not call those enemies, Dorothy Dawson,” said Constance, “ who are not afraid to speak the truth, and who warn a man of his errors. Mr. Taylor has flatterers ;—they are his true enemies.”

Here the conversation was broken, by the return of Grace, and the departure of the Miss Dawsons, after they had settled some matters relative to the afternoon school, for which purpose they had accompanied Constance home.

Grace presently began to speak of Constance having left their pew, expressing her fear that herself was the cause. At which, Mary Anne laughed, and said, "Oh, Grace, you need not apologize; we are not so formal. Besides, Constance always sits in the free seats; I cannot do the same, but I admire the simplicity and dignity of her conduct."

"Why do you do so, Constance?" asked Grace.

"I hate pews," replied Constance.

"So do I!" exclaimed Grace; "I had no idea you did."

"Oh, I should like to sit all together, high and low, rich and poor," returned Constance.

"So should I, if it could be managed," continued Grace, "I wished so much to be with you to-day, only I thought those seats were always for the poor, and I should feel taking somebody's place."

"I am sure Grace," said Fanny, "you would not like to step out of your own place, and sit with a set of low people—you don't know whom."

"I should not care, if it were the custom," replied Grace.

"If it were the custom," said Fanny, smiling, "Constance would find something else to like better."

"Oh, Fanny," exclaimed Grace, "that is not fair! Constance dislikes pews, and shows her dislike by her acts. One must admire her consistency, though we may not choose to imitate it."

"But you ought to imitate it if you admire it," observed Constance.

"No, not I!" answered Grace, "because you know at present I do as mamma wishes me; besides I should not

think it proper to do such a very remarkable thing, without being quite sure it was really right, and consulting those who could tell me."

"Then after all, your opinion is worth no more than Ellen's," said Mary Anne, "only she goes farther; she says that Constance is very wrong indeed to make herself so conspicuous, and to do differently from all of us."

"I am sure she does not make herself conspicuous," observed Fanny, "for with her bonnet and shawl nobody would guess that she did not belong to those who sit in the free-seats."

"But, my dear Fanny," said Mrs. Duff, "you do not know, Constance *did* make herself the public talk at first, and very unpleasant it was; and I thought, and so did your papa, that Ellen talked very sensibly indeed on the subject."

"Yet you know," observed Mary Anne, "Ellen hates pews and even galleries a great deal more than Constance, so odd and inconsistent she is!"

"Yes, I call it inconsistent, if she hates pews and galleries, not to protest against them," said Constance, who was not inclined to commit herself on Ellen's general inconsistency.

"I have never seen any thing inconsistent in Ellen," said Grace.

"That is because you do not know her as well as we do," said Mary Anne. "Or," added Constance, "because you judge upon different rules."

"When we speak of consistency, we ought to judge people on their own rules," observed Grace.

"Oh, Ellen is consistent enough upon her own rules," cried Mary Anne; "she has always a good reason to give for herself."

Constance spoke a few words to Mary Anne, and pro-

nounced that Grace this time had the best of the argument. It was now time for the Miss Duffs' appointment, and the room was shortly cleared.

CHAPTER X.

Deeds not words.

Proverb.

"GRACE," cried Fanny, "do come up to my room, I must talk to you! I hope you have no objection to talk over daily matters on Sunday, but I have no one to consult but you, and I must talk."

"Oh, Grace," continued she, after they had both taken their seats in her room, "I am so miserable! I do not know what to do with myself!" and she burst into tears.

"I will do any thing, dear Fanny, that will be a comfort to you," said Grace, very much grieved to see her friend so troubled, and wondering if she was right to feel very indignant at Mr. Guppy's ambiguous conduct; "but I had rather be the last person you should *consult*."

"So you should be, Grace, at least I mean others should come before you," replied Fanny, "if they understood things; but what would be the use of my consulting them now, when you see how blind they choose to make themselves to facts."

Grace could not disagree in Fannys representation, but kept silence. Fanny continued—"they were always so prejudiced in all that concerned me; when I was a child, I used to tell them outright, but it would not be proper to do so now. I remember when Isabella Ward, Emily's cousin, took that violent fancy to me, they would not believe

it, and would have it that Constance was her favourite ; at last they saw how it was, and were obliged to confess ; so it will be again."

These remarks of Fanny's helped Grace to see what line she ought to take. "But, Fanny," said she, "have you surer ground to go upon than they ? has there been any change in that respect ?"

"Why, Grace," replied Fanny, somewhat impatiently, "we have before talked that over. You yourself see how that is ; besides, I do think that by word as well as by manner and implication, Osmond has several times decidedly committed himself. Did you not notice his parting speech—when he said, 'too happy !' you must have observed he glanced at me, and left the too 'proud !' for the rest ; and the same when he hoped that 'duty' would not always interfere ; you must have noticed that."

"I did notice it, Fanny," said Grace, "but I know when one has any one certain notion in one's head, how every little thing sometimes seems to confirm it ; and I therefore doubt my own judgment, and would wish you to do so too. If it were as we think, others would be of the same opinion."

"Indeed they would not, Grace," answered Fanny ; "Constance believes Osmond as religious as she is, and so chooses to think he would never care for me ; and mamma would have no objection at all to have Mary Anne married. She married young herself, and she wants us all to do the same ; at least she does not care so much about me, because I am not under her management ; you know Lady Minette would have all the credit."

"Oh, Fanny," cried Grace, shocked, "I do not like to hear you talk so."

"My mamma is not like your mamma, Grace, as Mary Anne said," returned Fanny, smiling. "But to return to what I was saying ; never mind whether Osmond has spoken or not. I see—you see—any body who observes,

can see how it is ; you know your mamma did, and my aunt Ward, and Emily, and George, and I know papa one day said to mamma, 'you may talk of Mary Anne, but I have a notion elsewhere,' and I saw he nodded towards me ; will not this satisfy you, Grace ?"

"I cannot talk to you, Fanny," returned her friend, "except you allow me to say exactly what I think."

"Well, I repeat," continued Fanny, without noticing Grace's remark, "never mind, whether Osmond has spoken or not ; I know his mind, and I see that it is nothing but a high sense of duty that keeps him silent at present. Why may I not trust to his honour, his generosity ! Oh, how generous he is !" pursued she, worked up to one of her fits of enthusiasm, "every word, every thought is noble and honourable ! how he hates and detests all low mean ways ; how beautifully indignant he grows, and his expressive brow quivers with feeling at any unjust or unworthy act ; then how generous he is ! he makes use of his fine talents to set off others, not to serve his own vanity ; do you never observe this, Grace ?"

"I enter into all you say, Fanny," replied Grace, "but I do not by any means admire all his sentiments and opinions ; and I have something to add when you have done."

"One little thing I thought so strikingly generous in him, Grace," pursued Fanny ; "in that beautiful picture he drew one morning, the second time I saw him after my illness ; he made his hero, the physician, exactly in person, mind, and qualities, the very contrary of himself ! Now did you not think that a fine trait of character ?"

"I did not think of it in that way ; it would have been very odd indeed if he had described himself—do you not think so ?" replied Grace, laughing ; "but I dare say he did not think about it ; he wished to soften your prejudice against medical men."

"Well, and so he did a little for the time," said Fanny. Presently she continued, "Well, Grace, I am sure you are much harder upon him, than he upon you, for he admires you so very much ; he said you were one of the rarest creatures in the whole world ; that you had the finest and most correct judgment he ever met with in any man or woman, old or young ; and that your beauty of person he had never seen excelled—but once. I was so pleased to hear him say all this."

"Mr. Guppy seems capable of saying any thing of or to any body, by your account, Fanny," observed Grace, composedly, yet annoyed at colouring in spite of herself.

"Oh, but he spoke always quite differently of you from any body at all," said Fanny, aware of Grace's allusion to a former conversation, "indeed he did ; he seemed really to like you and appreciate you. Besides, how differently he behaved to you from the others. I am sure he always treated you so gently and deferentially, I wondered you did not fall in love with him. But I can see, Grace, nothing attracts you. As he said, very truly, he knew you had a soul above flattery. To be sure, what penetration of character he has !"

Here Fanny made a pause, probably pondering over the perfections of one of the individuals in question ; and Grace perceiving her friend had come in some measure to a stop, asked, "But, Fanny, if you are so sure and satisfied altogether, why did you call yourself miserable, as you did just now ?"

This sudden appeal to her own feelings a good deal startled Fanny ; she was puzzled, and hardly knew what to say ; she knew she had felt unhappy and disquieted at the moment, and that her tears were quite sincere ; but subsequent talk with Grace, and the consequent revival of bright remembrances, had effaced the feeling and almost the memory of thoughts which at the time were very op-

pressive. She saw clearly enough, however, to perceive she was in a dilemma : she must either confess to an inconsistency of sentiment, one way or other, or satisfy herself and her friend that her misery arose from some other cause, than that which, at the moment she spoke, she imagined. Therefore it was with no want of precision that she replied, " Why, Grace, you must know how harassing it is to me to have all about me, and those I ought most to regard, treat the matter as they do ; you heard Constance talk yesterday. Besides, you know I must be miserable, parted as I am from him, without knowing when we may meet again.—But, Grace," added she, brightening up, " that is very romantic ; you know it is just what one reads of in novels. You know Scott says—

‘ When lovers meet in adverse hour,
'Tis like a sun-glimpse through a shower.’

And so it would be if we met now. There is no end to the passages of poetry where faithful lovers sigh apart in woe."

Grace was fully alive to the amusing nature of Fanny's mind and manner, but she had found by experience she was not one to be rallied into right conduct or high feeling. She therefore passed over the latter part of her friend's remarks without even a smile (Fanny did not mean it to excite a smile) and replied, " No, no, Fanny, this will not do ! you cannot and must not deceive yourself in this way ; you know, when you spoke to me, you had a different meaning."

Fanny was silent, for Grace's manner was such as to impress, especially when coupled with what she already knew of Grace.

" Now, Fanny," continued the latter, more seriously still, " do not be afraid of being honest with yourself ; it may save you self-reproach and suffering. Besides you ought to try and look at things just as they are, quite

without disguise. Now do, pray, dear Fanny, ask yourself, was it not some latent doubts and misgivings that caused you those uncomfortable moments?"

"One always must have doubts occasionally," returned Fanny, "when things are disturbed and left in an unsettled state."

"And indeed, Fanny," continued Grace, "I think you have every reason to have misgivings and doubts. As you make me talk with you, I must indeed tell you my mind, though I am afraid I shall pain and vex you. I see you have a great many strong grounds for entertaining a very high opinion of Mr. Guppy. His appearance and manners, and good feelings on some subjects, his sense of religion, and the high opinion of all your family, are enough to justify this; but on the other hand, there are some drawbacks, you know, and you have sense enough to be alive to them, even though others may pass them over. His being so utter a stranger, and not daring to mention a single friend or connexion; his being compelled to assume a false name; his general mystery, and, above all, his having led, as he confesses, a very dissipated life, are sufficient to cause you doubts and misgivings. Besides this, you must have noticed many things in him not quite proper yourself. It was very wrong to give you, as you have said he did, the impression of tolerating the rest of your family for your sake; and he had no right to relate his object and feelings in accompanying Constance all through that terrible storm. It was improper to you and your family, and his conduct seems to me to be making a handle of a profession of religion, as no serious person would do."

"Oh, Grace, you are very hard upon him," said Fanny, distressed, "you do not consider, that if he had not propitiated Constance and the rest, and even North, he could not have been so much with me. You know all story books and play books allow that sort of conduct."

"If they do," replied Grace, "we must not go to such books for rules of conduct. You talk of his honourable and generous feelings and words, and I complain that they are not at all shown in his acts."

"Now, Grace," said Fanny, "after all, you should blame me, and not him; you know a great deal—all, perhaps—is only my own fancy. He always spoke of Constance as a paragon of goodness, but I thought I sometimes saw a little curl on his lip, that betrayed that hers was not quite the goodness he preferred."

"But now, Fanny, for the worst part of what I have to say," pursued Grace: "I see the state of suspense and perplexity you are in, however you may disguise it, and I see it is his fault; whether he is conscious or not of his behaviour, it is his fault, and no man has any right to behave as he has done, particularly while he was under a cloud of mystery. I doubt whether his conduct can be right and clear under any circumstances, but I will not prejudge him. However, Fanny, for yourself your part is very clear."

"How?" asked Fanny, "what should I do?"

"Why that depends on your belief;—do you consider him a regular admirer in form?" asked Grace, smiling.

"What if I do?" enquired Fanny.

"If you do, you should tell your mamma so, and give her your reasons."

"Oh, no, I cannot say I do consider he has declared himself; I have told you so often before," replied Fanny.

"Well, then, there is still one thing for you to do, Fanny."

"What?" enquired the other.

"Forget him, or at least think of him only as any other agreeable person," said Grace.

"Oh, Grace, impossible! you do not know what you ask! you are not in my place!"

"But I think if I were in your place, I should give myself the same advice, and try to follow it," said Grace. "Oh, Fanny, we can do any thing that is right, if we only set about it the right way."

"I know what you mean by that, Grace," replied Fanny, "and I am sure I have prayed earnestly; I have prayed constantly that he may have every blessing that is good for him, as well as for myself."

"Then now, Fanny, pray that you may have strength to do what is required of you, and at the same time make an effort to turn your mind to other things. If he is fit for you, events will be brought round, and you will meet again under happier circumstances; and if he is not, you will be able to consider him as an unworthy stranger, instead of an unworthy friend."

Grace continued to urge her friend, reminding her that she would be at Lady Minette's in a new scene, and could make use of it in assisting to exertion and self-command.

"Ah, Grace, that is worse and worse," said Fanny; "Lady Minette is a vain, silly, gay old woman herself; her house, ways, and habits give no play either to my mind or my heart; and except I make a world of my own, I live the most tiresome insipid life possible."

Poor Grace was constantly in a maze, when facts were stated point blank. She thought Lady Minette was a very serious character, and was highly respected by the Duffs, since she had become religious through Fanny's means. How she wished that Campbell had not been interrupted in his remarks one day, just as he was about to speak of this lady.

"Well, I cannot understand," at length observed Grace, "I thought Lady Minette was very religious."

"Oh, yes, so she is," replied Fanny, "you know she never goes to the play now, or the opera; at least never except she has tickets given her; and she always goes to

Mr. M'Queer's chapel, and often with me to the Bible and Missionary meetings.—Oh, yes, to be sure she is religious," added Fanny, as though surprised at the doubt Grace had implied; "you know she takes in the religious magazines, and the world often scoffs at her for being so pious."

"Then why did you call her gay?" asked Grace.

"Did I say gay?" said Fanny, reconsidering her meaning. "Well, you know, if I did not remember she was religious, I should call her gay; for she is never happy but in company, and she is fond of pleasure, and show, and dress, though she is so old, and altogether she is the oddest queerest woman you ever saw. I call her my lady Minuet; she has such an old-fashioned extraordinary sweep in her movements. But pray do not let us talk of her now."

While Grace was musing over all she had heard of Lady Minette, and trying to reconcile the accounts one with another, Fanny's mind had returned to their former more welcome topic, and clasping her hands in an animated manner, she exclaimed, "Oh, Grace! what a beautiful story it would make!"

Before the tones of her voice had ceased, the door opened, and Eliza, one of her younger sisters, suddenly entered, without knowing the room was occupied. It was Constance's room also, and Eliza explained that Constance told her she had lost her brooch. The careful girl had been looking about for it, and thought she would examine Constance's own room. "The brooch! the coral brooch! the royal brooch! as Emily used to call it," exclaimed Fanny, "and really it is lost at last!—How glad Emily will be!"

CHAPTER XI.

And though some, too, seeming holy,
Do account thy raptures folly,
Thou dost teach me to condemn,
What makes knaves and fools of them.

George Withers, on Poetry.

It had been a promise to Lady Minette that Fanny was to be brought back to her the next day after their return to Winterton, and Mrs. Duff, being acquainted with the character of that lady, judged it best to carry Fanny to London on Monday, and leave her if it was desired, although it was a week earlier than expected.

"The attention, at any rate, will please her ladyship," said Mrs. Duff. So a carriage was ordered, and Mrs. Duff set off with Fanny, immediately after breakfast.

The elder part of the family declined a shopping expedition: Grace was then invited, but she was anxious to write to her mamma. Mrs. Duff held out the prospect of being introduced to Lady Minette, but Grace had latterly heard too little in her favour to make *that* an inducement to change her determination; so, at last, some of the children filled the vacant seats in the carriage.

This day slipped away quietly enough. Charlotte was engaged superintending household arrangements in her mother's absence, for the house was in a sad state of disorder,—as might be expected under the circumstances. Also, it had to be got into some tolerable appearance by the Friday, as Mrs. Duff had resolved upon having some friends to dinner on that day. This was partly in honour

of Grace, but rather silently so ; as the Duffs would have thought it formal to acknowledge paying such a mark of attention. The other two young ladies were busy among their friends, talking over their Hastings expedition, and arranging plans of present and future benefit. Constance too had her cards to settle with the secretaries and treasurers of several societies, as she had collected various shillings, sixpences, and pennies, pledges of her zeal in absence ; also, she had to present her account to a society of her own formation, of the number of tracts she had distributed in the last month ; but, above all, to talk over a scheme which had long occupied her mind, but which only now promised a prospect of being brought into practice. This was a refuge for juvenile offenders, to be established at Winterton, under her own superintendence. Constance had met at Hastings, one who was likely to be a zealous coadjutor. This lady was acquainted with the celebrated Mrs. Hall ; and this Mrs. Hall was to be staying a few days this week at friends of the Duffs, at Winterton. Constance considered, that if she could bring her schemes before this lady, and interest her in the work, her institution was secure. She had almost resolved upon suggesting, and effecting, her own return home from Hastings for this purpose, when her wish was brought about in the easier manner we have related. It was on this business that Constance was so pressingly engaged to the last moment at Hastings. She hastened to her friends, the Gregories, to negotiate an introduction to the Mrs. Hall above-mentioned, and returned, as may be remembered, only just in time, before starting.

Grace spent the morning helping poor Charlotte whenever she could, looking over portfolios of drawings and paintings, taking a regular survey of Mary Anne's portraits of her twin sisters, making one or two sketches of the house from the garden, which was a very pleasant one,

and enjoying the sights and sounds of a totally new scene. While she was sketching in the garden, Campbell emerged from his hermitage, and to her great surprise suddenly appeared before her. He mentioned a favourable spot for a sketch in some part of the garden, but when he came to point out his scene, there was too much foliage to suit Grace, and Campbell had to defend his taste by averring, that a most picturesque haystack and appurtenances had disappeared during his absence from home.

"But yet," continued Grace, "how often it happens that scenes that have pleased at one period, seem quite poor and common-place the next time they are seen."

"Perhaps they are actually changed," observed Campbell, with his vanished haystack still in his mind.

"Well, there may be a difference in the lights and shades, and seasons, of course," replied Grace, "but I believe it is more in one's own frame of mind; else how does it happen that the same thing occurs in books?—do you ever observe that?"

"Why, yes, in poetry, I suppose I do," replied Campbell; "but I have so little time to enjoy poetry, that it is likely to be like music—always a treat to me."

"You and Constance look upon poetry in a very different light," observed Grace; who was anxious to raise a discussion on the subject.

"I suppose we do," replied Campbell, "and I suppose our opposite opinions are visible enough to by-standers. Pray, with which side do you take part?"

"Oh, I?" cried Grace, a little frightened at this formal mode of being required to state her opinion,—"*I really know nothing about it.*"

Campbell rallied her on being a poetess, and yet knowing nothing of poetry.

"I am sure I am right here," replied Grace, laughing, "my verses are mere mechanical exercises—not poems;

and, as a lamp-maker knows nothing of the science of light, or a water-carrier of hydraulics, so I am ignorant of the science of poetry."

"You can talk of poetry, I suppose," said Campbell, "and have your own views on different styles and manners."

"Yes; but I do not know good from bad, or the uses of poetry," said Grace.

"The uses of poetry!" exclaimed Campbell, "that sounds very utilitarian."

"Well, I believe I am a thorough utilitarian," said Grace, "for I like to know the uses of every thing, and poetry among the number."

"Why do you read or write poetry?" asked Campbell.

"Because I like it," replied Grace, "or, because I find it the easiest mode of expressing myself; but I always think I should be better employed some other way."

"Do you like characters totally devoid of poetry?"

"I do not know, I think not," said Grace, hesitating; "but I think I ought;—poetry has nothing to do with religion."

"Nothing!" exclaimed Campbell, "it seems to me to have a great deal to do with religion."

"How?" asked Grace.

"Why, if we may say so without irreverence," said Campbell, "the very act of prayer is poetical—faith is poetical—belief in the unseen world is poetical."

"Yes, in a certain sense," replied Grace, "but then, you know, Constance says that there is no poetry in the New Testament; she thinks that Christianity is essentially a revelation of truth, and that it was intended to abolish all imagery of mind, as well as ceremonies and types."

"Then what does Constance say to the Sacraments?" enquired Campbell.

"I asked her about that and some other instances," re-

plied Grace, "but I never like repeating opinions for others, and she did not answer me directly to the point."

"I do not know what people mean when they say that the gospel is not poetical," remarked Campbell, "or when they say even, that it does not contain instances of imagery-teaching, similar to those of the Old Testament prophets. Ezekiel was the chief of those who were bidden to warn and prophecy by outward and visible signs. Elijah and others spoke in much the same way. None indeed pretend to deny that the Old Testament is full of such cases; and why the same principle of teaching should not be seen and acknowledged in the New Testament, I never can understand. Our Saviour, on this very model, is baptized—takes a young child and sets him in the midst—washes his disciples' feet—enters Jerusalem on an ass—allows himself to be anointed more than once—breathes on his Apostles—above all, as I said, institutes the Sacraments. These and similar acts and doings seem gracious tokens that the faculty of the human mind, which they encourage, is not intended to be repressed by revelation, any more than by nature."

"But then," observed Grace, "this is only one part of poetry."

"At any rate a second part," replied Campbell, "for we have before spoken of another branch, and there are surely abundant materials left for another and another in the New Testament, if you desire it."

"After all," said Grace, "all these would only prove the propriety of poetry on sacred subjects. What can you say for any other? There is so much that is delightful, bad as well as good; and I know I do not know good from bad."

"Then," said Campbell, smiling, "I suppose you must learn good from bad."

"Even then," continued Grace, "I cannot tell if good profane poetry is right."

"I suppose," returned Campbell, "if it is in substance true, and just, and pure, and lovely, if praiseworthy and full of virtue, you would have no objection to it."

"Well," said Grace, much satisfied at heart, "I have often thought of that text in connexion with such subjects.—But even then, after all," added she, smiling at her own slowness of conviction, "how little poetry there is such as you describe! Your text would cut out nearly all the race of poets we have."

"Not quite so bad, I think," replied Campbell, "though you know I do not profess to have gone through a regular course of poetry, as I suppose all ladies have. Surely I could name at least three great living poets who may be considered to come up to such a standard, as far as human works can be expected to do. Then again from others we may pick and choose quantities, that will serve to augment our mass. And what do you say to Shakspeare?"

"That I wish to be allowed to consider him all but beyond human genius, and yet after all cannot wonder at Constance, who talks as she does of his plays."

"Shakspeare is very different from those poets," observed Campbell, "whose errors are blended into the frame-work of their poetry; where one cannot find, perhaps, a single line without flaw, or our consciousness of flaw, if one takes words and sentiments exactly in the sense they were intended."

"Ah," cried Grace, "I know you allude, among others, to Lord Byron; and I must confess his moodiness and pride peep out constantly in almost every poem of his I have seen. But there is another race of minor poets—many of the last century—whose writings are exactly such as you described just now;—*all but* very good and very nice; some with exceedingly smooth and attractive versification."

"Parnell's 'Hermit,' for instance," said Campbell.

"And that, take it altogether," continued Grace, "is freer from the faults I seem to perceive than most others. But what a pity it is to find attractive or striking poetry, all but so good and true, as these I speak of. Why should it be?"

"Why should men be attractive and striking, and—all but—so good and true?" asked Campbell.

Grace almost started, for her thoughts in a moment turned to their late Hastings acquaintance; but Campbell appeared quite innocent of any allusion, and she replied, "Well, I suppose it is so; make the men good, and their poems would be good. But," continued she, presently, remembering Fanny's objection, "some think that without bad passions and actions we could have no poetry at all,—that these are the food of poetry."

"Even if so," replied Campbell, "they may be selected judiciously, and treated so as to advance the cause of truth and goodness; or if the world were to become so virtuous as to outgrow the very remembrance of such evil," added he, smiling, "perhaps a new order of minds would arise, which could make goodness poetical, without the at-present-apparent-necessary assistance of evil to bring it out."

"Well, I cannot help thinking," continued Grace, after she had been musing over reflections which Campbell's remark aroused in her mind, "I cannot help thinking that Milton has done a great deal of harm to our ideas of goodness and innocence, by drawing such a dull picture of them in the *Eden of Paradise Lost*."

"Ah," cried Campbell, "I have allowed myself once to listen to your heresies upon Milton, and now you grow bolder and bolder."

"Well," returned Grace, smiling, "you know I tell you I do not know good poetry from bad. I do not like the *Paradise Lost*, and I admire some parts of Lord Byron!"

This was by no means all Grace's conversation with Campbell on the subject ; it branched out into other lines, and one little passage on poetry of mind and character, especially satisfied Grace. She thought she began to see more use in poetry than she had ever before dared hope to discover. She had never had so pleasant a discussion with Campbell, and she enjoyed it most thoroughly. Her only drawback was the reflection that poor Charlotte, who would have been so happy to have joined the *tête-a-tête*, was hard at work in-doors. Grace feared she was enjoying a selfish pleasure, though Charlotte had assured her that till three o'clock, nobody could assist in the work that was going on. At three therefore Grace sought her quiet friend, and found in a short space occupation ; though her toils rather assisted the sempstresses, than relieved poor Charlotte materially. Grace often mused over the uses of money, and wondered that people able to buy so much, should fix their wants just above what their means could command, so as to chain down some individual of the family to the needle. But Grace was no housekeeper, and was inexperienced beside, and perhaps did not possess the organ of household contrivance and economy, so she could not be expected to understand such matters ; and, to do her justice, she was in a measure sensible of her deficiency.

Mrs. Duff returned in the evening without Fanny. Lady Minette wanted her adopted child very particularly. This was rather a disappointment to Grace, who had counted on Fanny's return, and had left unsaid some things she wished to say. North also arrived at home from Hastings about the same time, and had an interview with all the family : but Constance was closeted up with her alone, till quite late at night ; hearing, it was supposed, an account of Mr. Badcock's last sermon, and other matters connected with their friends at Hastings.

CHAPTER XII.

Gone, from her hand and bosom gone,
The royal brooch.....

Campbell.

NEXT morning after breakfast, Constance retired to her room for a short space, and returned with a roll of papers in her hand. She stepped forward, laid her hand on the table to bespeak attention, and announced that she had something of importance to communicate. She then imparted the news that she had lost her brooch. Mrs. Duff remembered that Eliza had casually mentioned the circumstance on Sunday, and wondered she had not thought of enquiring if it had been found.

"Ah," said Constance in reply, "I know Eliza told, it escaped me by accident when Eliza was in the room. I was very much vexed with her, for I was most anxious not to speak a word prematurely."

"My dear Constance, why not?" asked Mrs. Duff, who was always alive to a loss, "the sooner a loss is mentioned the better; the greater chance there is of the article being found."

"Yes, mamma, in usual cases," replied Constance, "but this is not a usual case."

Mrs. Duff asked how long her daughter had missed her brooch?

Constance could not exactly tell; she said, "it had puzzled her, but after much deliberation she thought she had not seen it since early in their Hastings visit; but that all this would be noticed in her statement."

"Are all your things unpacked, my dear?" asked Mrs. Duff?

"Yes, I took care of that before I spoke," replied Constance; "though I was quite sure, at once, that if it was not in my dressing-case it was no where, because I was entirely certain that Jessie Baines had taken it!"

Mrs. Duff was a little startled.

Charlotte exclaimed, "Oh, Constance!" with much deeper feeling than she was accustomed to exhibit, while her mother very composedly expostulated with Constance for bringing such charges on light grounds.

Constance replied, "It is not on light grounds, mamma, as I can very well prove. I was first conscious that I missed the brooch on Saturday night, for I opened my dressing-case, to see if it was there. Now I know,—I am quite sure,—that the last place in which I saw my brooch was my dressing-case, and that it must have been there till the case was packed up. I wore it very little while we were at Hastings. I took it out purposely, partly because Emily stumbled at it, and partly because I was visiting so much among the poor; and I make a point of never going among them with any thing on, which I would not have them wear, else I could not with an easy conscience rebuke them. I stuck it into the white neck ribbon, and wound the ribbon round it; also I stuck no pin in it; I never do such a thing. I then put it into my dressing-case. I remember all this quite well. Now look," added she, producing a white ribbon, "here is the ribbon, no brooch, as you see," continued she, bending about the ribbon, "but a common pin instead. Besides this, look at the pin!—I have not moved it!—Any one who knows me can say I never put in that pin, and I dare say Grace Leslie could say it was Jessie's putting in."

Both these assertions were self-evident to those who knew the parties; but Charlotte suggested that the ribbon might be unwound, or carelessly wound, and in that case Jessie was sure to roll it up properly. She also asked if it

was the only pin in the dressing-case which Jessie had put in, and was rejoiced to find there were several others. Charlotte warmly testified that she had handed to Jessie several small articles of Constance's to fill the boxes with, and that Jessie had refolded and put pins in almost every thing; Jessie was a very neat packer, and though in haste, very particular, since Grace had charged her to pack Constance's boxes with great care. The dressing-case was of a good size, and Jessie packed so tight that it held a great deal, for it was not fitted up as such cases usually are, since Constance had much altered it from its original purpose to suit plans of her own. Constance continued her proofs. "I do not speak hastily, or without warrant," said she; "I waited till North returned, to hear her opinion on the subject, and to know what she had to say to the girl. I grieve to say her opinion is any thing but satisfactory. She considers Jessie ignorant of all true religion, and therefore prepared for any evil work. She says, she laboured hard to instruct the poor girl, but was received with coldness and ingratitude."

"But her honesty, my dear Constance," said Mrs. Duff, who was doubly anxious in consideration of having recommended Jessie, "it is her honesty we must speak of at present."

"Well, mamma, all in good time," returned the daughter; "but you must allow such a foundation, or rather such a want of foundation is a preparation for all wickedness. However it has been my firm conviction all along, though for the sake of the girl's character I did not mention it publicly, and now I am authorized to say, it is also North's firm conviction, that Jessie Baines knew all about the noises that Fanny and Grace heard at Hastings on Midsummer-eve."

"Oh, impossible! quite impossible! how can you tell? what can you mean, Constance?" exclaimed Charlotte.

"I mean that Jessie Baines either meant to rob us or Mrs Leslie, and had let some one in for the purpose."

"Oh, Constance!" exclaimed Charlotte, with tones she had never before used towards her sister.

Mrs. Duff asked her daughter again for proofs. Constance replied, that she had done nothing hastily, but that she had taken a great deal of trouble and thought on the subject: that after examining North on her arrival the last evening, she had re-written her own statement, and interwoven North's evidence into it, so as to make a clear and intelligible document: that she would leave the papers for the perusal of her mother, and any body else who chose to read them, but she requested to have them sent up to her room as soon as they were done with. Saying this, she handed over the papers to her mother and left the room.

Mary Anne did not want to see or to hear the statement, since she had seen all before. Constance knew that entrusting her sister with her intended measures was the only means by which she could attain an uninterrupted disclosure. Mary Anne, then, not caring to hear, also left the room. Mrs. Duff disliked reading manuscript, and Charlotte was therefore called upon to read the papers through to her mother.

CHAPTER XIII.

.....Cry, "Lost! lost! lost!"

Scott.

CONSTANCE'S statement was carefully written, and was as follows:—

Statement of the case of the Lost Brooch, with Susan North's deposition. C. D. July 11.

"When Grace and Fanny talked of noises on Midsum-

mer-eve, I considered it a mere phantom of their imagination. I no more believed it than I believed the account Campbell gave of the ghost at the same time. That night I had a talk with North, or rather she talked with me. She told me, that she did not wish any thing that she said to be repeated ; that she felt very tender of the character of a young creature like poor Jessie Baines, that she would not, for the world, injure her by unfounded suspicions ; so tender was our good North's conscience. But she added, that she had every reason to believe that Jessie had the night before let a thief into the house. I was surprised, and asked how she could fancy such a thing, for though I had a bad opinion of the girl, I never imagined any thing of this kind. She said *she* had not thought of any thing as bad till that morning on going down stairs ; and she gave me the following account."

(N. B. *The following statement is copied from one I drew up at Hastings, from North's lips, on the 24th of June, C. D.*)

"I was down in the kitchen this morning the first in the house. When I went into the pantry, I was surprised to find the supper-tray with the dishes in it, and some other crockery, which I remembered had been placed on the dresser before the window the night before, all carefully removed, and every thing set in a heap on one side of the window. I supposed that Martha had done so to fasten the window more easily, and I immediately looked to see about the fastening." (The window was a sliding one, the proper fastening was gone, and in its stead a long stick was placed in the groove. The stick was not long enough, and therefore a cork was also put in the groove in order to secure the window, C. D.)

"I had been uneasy-like about this fastening ever since we came into the house, as all the servants can tes-

tify, and Jessie Baines knew I thought it an inconvenient fastening. When I looked over at the stick, I was struck all of a heap ! the stick was there, and in its right place, but the cork was gone. I looked and felt about, but found it nowhere, but in the groove there lay unbroken above half of the sealing-wax, which had been on the top of the cork." (North showed this to me, and I desired her to keep it quite safe. I afterwards sealed it up and she has it now." C. D.)

"I saw in a moment that some thief had entered the house, and then almost unknownst to myself, I remembered all that happened the night before after we was retired to repose. Alas ! thought I, that so much wickedness should abide in such a young bosom, and I grieved over the sinfulness of the human heart ! The night before I was very tired with cleaning the house, and putting all to rights as mistress desired, and I got me to bed before the rest. Jessie Baines came up last of all. I roused me up to ask her if she had been down stairs again ; she said, no ; she had been all the time with her mistress and young lady. I then composed me to sleep again ; but I heard her, and Hanson, and Martha talking and arguefying about going down stairs again. Jessie was very eager to do so ; she said she had left a book in the drawing-room, which her young mistress had given her to read over for her morning's lesson. I roused me to say, ' Nonsense, Jessie, the Bible is the only book you ought to read ; get your lesson for Miss Leslie out of that, and you may do her good as well as yourself.' Jessie took no heed of my counsel, but went on talking of this book of hers, and said, it was putting a slight on her young lady to seem to forget the book which Miss Leslie herself had so carefully marked. I asked her what difference it would make to her if she got it in the morning ? and in myself I wondered what could make her so uneasy-like about her book.

"Hanson then spoke, and they all talked together much longer than I thought they ought, in a quiet family like ours; however *my* words go as nothing with some people, so I held my peace and fell asleep again; but I heard they were talking a great deal about thieves, and I wondered why they should talk of thieves. Well,—at the time I thought nothing of it; but I am sure I was not a-dreaming, for in the middle of the night, I was waked up with hearing Jessie shut the door, and get into bed again. I thought, in the innocence of my heart, 'Ah! that obstinate young thing has gone down, after all, for her book!' and then I forgot it, because it seemed to me, in my sleepiness, that she went to the wrong side of the room for her bed; but now I see all as clear as if it had been daylight; putting all these things together, and seeing the sights I did in the morning, I feel no doubt, but as Jessie Baines got up again after we were all asleep, and crept down and let in a thief; but either they found no plate about,—and indeed, thanks to my dear mistress's carefulness, there was not a thread about the house worth carrying away, or something happened to alarm them,—and she was glad to let him out again. It is not for me however to tell how all this part happened; I have certainly missed nothing yet, but something may come to light before long; but nothing can satisfy my mind but that Jessie Baines did, as I say, get up, and let in a thief or thieves, though I here solemnly declare to you, my dear Christian friend, Miss Constance, that I will not be the first to injure a young creature, and to blight her prospects in a world of woe."

"This evidence," continued Constance in her statement, "I thought it safe and right to take down and keep, in case any further suspicions should arise. North and I had had some previous argument over the matter, and at last I agreed, out of charity to the unfortunate girl, that we would make no stir, and not publish the fact of some

person having actually entered the house. I was persuaded to this rather by our tender-hearted North's entreaties, than by my own judgment ; and now I bitterly repent, as I usually do, not having followed the leadings of my mind. However, if I erred, it was on the side of kindness and mercy ; and justice now must take its course the more freely. For my part, I never at first, as I said before, believed in Fanny's story of the noises, or in Grace's of the appearance in the drawing-room ; but when North told me all this, I was at once convinced—I saw that all she asserted must be true of Jessie, and that it was confirmed over and over again by Grace's and Fanny's evidence ; for it is too plain, that either the thief, or Jessie, or both, stole upstairs to the drawing-room, thinking, or rather, by Jessie's means, *knowing* that all the portable valuables in the house were in Mrs. Leslie's room—not in any of ours ; that this thief, alarmed by the unexpected sight of a light in the room at that time of night, and probably even by the sight of Grace herself, had swiftly and carefully closed the door and crept down stairs again—just as Grace in her account described—and that Jessie let him out. It is not for me, as North said in her simplicity, to account for any incongruities that may appear to invalidate the truth of these statements, such as why Jessie did not replace the supper-tray, crockery, &c. as she found them, and other objections that might be raised. The human mind in guilt is always inconsistent, and often betrays itself in acts, which cannot be understood by those who are preserved from such depth of depravity. I therefore leave this part, without attempting any explanation, to return to our simple unsuspecting North. She never remembered that of course Jessie would lead any thief to her own mistress's room, where there were articles worth taking away. Had she thought of this, she need not have been puzzled as to the reason of the thief decamping without carrying off any booty ; moreover

she did not then know of Grace hearing and seeing the things she did that night, or even of her sitting up, and I kept all these miserably clear proofs against the poor girl secret from North, not desiring to add to her already too well-founded suspicions.

The next intimation I had of guilt on Jessie's part, was one evening meeting her on the stairs. She was coming out of my room, and looked frightened and guilty, as she always does, which made me at once suspect that there was something amiss. I accordingly questioned her, on which she coloured very much, but so far from being timid in her manner, became rather bold and forward, and replied, that North was very busy, and had desired her to go and turn down the beds. I enquired if she had done any thing beside turning down the beds, and she said she had put the room to rights, and added, that North had often requested her to do the same. This was what I call forward in a servant, to volunteer explanations. Jessie's usual frightened manner always leaves her when she speaks to one, which I consider a very bad sign of character. This is not the first time I have had occasion to observe it. I reproved North for letting a stranger, and indeed one worse than a stranger, into our rooms. Our kind forgiving North asked me what I meant, and I reminded her of her former suspicions of Jessie. In her soft-hearted charity, she replied, 'Oh, Miss ! I have long forgotten all that ; we must not bear malice, but forgive ; we all have much to be forgiven.' I said nothing to blunt the edge of good North's kindness, but simply desired the thing might not occur again. To throw a light upon this conduct of Jessie, I must again have recourse to North's evidence, and let it be remembered, I had never heard what follows till this very evening about two hours ago."

Susan North's evidence concerning the coral brooch.

" Jessie Baines in the kitchen often talked of Miss Con-

stance's coral brooch ; she said one day, after she had been in the bed-rooms, that she had put Miss Constance's coral brooch in the pincushion ; and another time she observed that Miss Constance's coral brooch was just exactly like one that a cousin of hers bought at some fair to give to the young woman he was going to marry." Constance's remarks proceeded. " Now most people would consider this remark of Jessie Baines a gross insult in every way, but I hope I am above such feelings. However her observations should not be passed over without notice, since they betray the same forwardness and disrespect I have before had occasion to point out, and I fear besides, a prying habit, which is more likely than any other to lead first to covetousness, and afterward to theft. This I fear has been too truly the course of the unfortunate girl ; for I myself hereby declare solemnly, I feel no manner of doubt, but that her guilty and bold demeanour when I met her that evening on the stairs, arose from the consciousness of the wicked deed she was contemplating in her heart, and which she intended to perpetrate the very first moment that a convenient opportunity presented itself. I must now go on to my actual loss of the brooch, or rather state the last time I saw it, and all I remember about it. My memory is tolerably correct, and some of our Hastings party will, I dare say, be able to bear witness to the accuracy of my statements, when the facts are put before them. I did not see my brooch for a long time before we left Hastings ; I candidly confess I am somewhat puzzled to know *how* long. My memory, which is, as every body knows, correct, would lead me to say that I had not seen it since the day of our evening walk in the Castle gardens, during the first week we spent at Hastings ; but on the other hand, my impressions of connected circumstances contradict this. It seems to me that I wore the brooch longer at Hastings, and I could fancy a faint remembrance of seeing the brooch

in my pincushion the very evening after I met Jessie on the stairs. Also I should have thought that that evening was later than the first week we were at Hastings, only from an entry in my diary, this cannot be the case. However these matters are quite immaterial, and I only allude to them from an excessive—perhaps a too sensitive—feeling of accuracy. I remember perfectly, however, that the last time I wore my brooch was in the Castle gardens. All will remember our walk there with Frank Freeman. I joined the rest after they had come in, and Campbell paid my entrance money. This led to a conversation, in which Emily charged me with inconsistency. I confess I had been unhappy in wearing my brooch that day among the poor whom I had been visiting, and on this occasion, and the one before-mentioned, I resolved never to wear it again. I took off my brooch, and put it, with my neck-ribbon, into my basket. Afterwards, when I got home, I took it out, rewinded it, with the brooch inside, put in *no pin!* and laid it just as it was in my dressing-case. It must have been there when Jessie Baines chose to pack up my things; and as an indisputable proof that she actually took it,—when I anxiously sought for it, immediately on our arrival at home on Saturday night, there was no brooch, but, in its place, the white neck-ribbon, rolled up anew, with a pin of Jessie's own sticking placed in it! What further evidence can be required, I am really at a loss to imagine: but, to prove the theft to the satisfaction of the most incredulous mind, I am desirous of having her boxes immediately searched; and I think we might discover there, not only the brooch, but also the cork, which, by fitting the wax still in North's possession, would at once entirely convict Jessie Baines of the two crimes, with which I feel it my unhappy duty to charge her. I, for my part, am determined I will not again, from any false charity, allow an offender to escape with-

out punishment ; in so doing a second time, I should certainly be partaker in the guilt ; neither will I suffer a respectable family to be harbouring a thief, whom we have ignorantly, or more correctly speaking, over-charitably, been the means of recommending. I therefore mean to write to Mrs. Childe, and acquaint her with the guilt of the unhappy girl. I shall request her to charge Jessie with the theft. If the culprit confesses, I should consider it in her favour ; but, whether she confesses or not, I shall insist on Mrs. Childe's discharging her from her service, and dismissing her on the spot. I have no doubt of Mrs. Childe doing so ; but if Jessie is obstinate, I shall think it right to send in Bow-street officers to search her boxes ; and shall let the law take its course. I wish to do every thing with justice and consideration towards all parties, I shall therefore enclose this statement in my letter to Mrs. Childe. Also, I have no objection that she should show it to Jessie, on condition that she does not make her acquainted with my further intention of sending in officers of justice. I ought to add, that when North inadvertently mentioned to Jessie, when alone, that she found things were disturbed below on the morning of the 24th of June, and that she felt sure that thieves had been in the house, Jessie turned excessively pale, but had the hypocrisy to exclaim, " Suppose I had not taken Hanson's advice, and had gone down for my book !" Also, the servant of the house at Hastings—Kitty—noticed to North footmarks of dust in the pantry on the morning of the 24th of June, but North, out of kindness to Jessie, made light of it. North also took no notice of the conversation, that arose in the kitchen in consequence, about thieves, or there certainly would have been a stir made at that time. Again, through an indiscretion of Mary Anne's, a report, connected with these unhappy affairs, got abroad a week or two afterwards ; but our excellent North co-operated with me to silence rumours

which, if encouraged, would have caused us to break the determination we had formed, from the purest motives, of keeping secret the guilt of the miserable girl."

With this sentence, Constance's statement came to an end.

CHAPTER XIV.

... laughed and shouted, "Lost ! lost ! lost !"

Scott.

It is necessary to follow Mary Anne after she left the breakfast room. Her first step was to seek Constance, who had but a few minutes preceded her, and whom she knew she should find at her desk, beginning her letter to Mrs. Childe.

The sisters had a conference of some length ; not that there was any difference of opinion between them, but Constance was more fully explaining points to which, before breakfast, she had not had time to do justice. Mary Anne was fully satisfied, and only anxious that events so exciting and interesting, should proceed in their course without delay. "So now," added she, at the close of their conversation, "I shall leave you to write your letter. Pray do not lose to-day ; and if you send your packet by Walters, you can have an answer to-morrow morning, by the post. Pray, Constance," added she, retiring, "be sure to *make* Mrs. Childe write by the post this evening ; if you do not insist upon it, you know you will not hear for a week ;—the Childes are such snails."

Constance assured her sister, that she had meant to exact an immediate reply from Mrs. Childe.

"I am going to tell Grace Leslie all that has happened," pursued Mary Anne, still standing at the door. "You know she was not in the room when you made the announcement of your loss."

"Yes, I observed she was not," replied Constance, "and very sorry I was; I wish every body to hear all; but Grace Leslie never is in the way, I think, when she is wanted."

"She is in the painting-room," replied Mary Anne, feeling fully as much to blame as Grace; "you know she has quite taken to my portraits, and she left the breakfast table as soon as ever you had said grace."

Constance lamented that she had not thought of securing the presence of every body, at the disclosure that was about to take place, after breakfast. "There were only mamma and Charlotte together, to hear my statement," said she; "I particularly wished Grace, as well as Campbell, to be present, because I am sure they must have been convinced."

Mary Anne at length proceeded to the painting-room, where she found Grace very busily engaged, as she expected.

"How you ran away after breakfast!" cried Mary Anne; "you have missed such a scene, and Constance is so sorry!"

"I had no idea any body wanted me," said Grace, looking up from her employment; "and you know I am very anxious to get through what we proposed; as Constance left, I thought I might."

"Oh, Constance returned directly," replied Mary Anne, "but of course you have not heard! though, I believe you do know of Constance's loss."

"Loss!" cried Grace, "what loss?—Oh, I remember, you mean her brooch. Eliza said she had lost her brooch on Sunday. I meant often to ask if it was found."

"Found!" cried Mary Anne, laughing, "it is not very likely to be found here!"

"She thinks then she lost it at Hastings?" said Grace, enquiringly, rather surprised by Mary Anne's manner.

"Is a thing lost when one knows where it is?" continued Mary Anne, laughing.

"Why then, I suppose you mean to say," replied Grace, thinking she was intended to laugh too, "that Constance lost it one morning in the bath, and that, like the Irishman's kettle, it is at the bottom of the sea."

"Why, no," said Mary Anne, "we do not think that, though we think it may be as much past recovery to us. We do not think that, because we think—we are quite sure—that Jessie Baines has taken it!"

"Taken it!" exclaimed Grace, with a sudden revulsion of feeling—"taken it! what can you mean, Mary Anne?"

"Taken it—stolen it!" repeated Mary Anne, coolly.

Grace certainly turned pale, but said nothing.

Mary Anne continued, "Ah! I said you would be more surprised than we are! You know, we never had a good opinion of Jessie."

"But what can make you think that Jessie has taken the brooch?" asked Grace, bringing down her manner so as to fall in with Mary Anne's.

"Oh, a hundred proofs!" cried Mary Anne; "you know Jessie packed up Constance's boxes, and the brooch is not there; and such a multitude of reasons beside, which I cannot remember.—Oh, besides I have not told you, that Constance has sure and certain evidence, that the noises you heard on Midsummer-eve, were Jessie's getting up and letting thieves into the house."

Grace this time felt as if she had leaped up to the ceiling. Incredulous and indignant expressions rose to her lips, but sensible of it being only Mary Anne to whom she was talking, she refrained from any outward exhibition of

her sentiments. At no time was she accustomed to act by impulse, and least of any towards one like Mary Anne. Besides it just then struck her that there might be some misunderstanding, and she proposed seeking Constance immediately.

Mary Anne assured her that Constance wished to explain the whole affair to every body, and she talked of the statement her sister had drawn up.—“It is so clever and clear, like all that Constance does,” added Mary Anne, “that it is quite impossible to doubt for a moment the guilt of Jessie. Mamma has got it now, but after she has done with it, Constance wishes you to see it ; she is quite vexed that you were not with them when it was read.”

Grace was grieved to find that Constance had felt the matter so serious as to think it necessary to draw up a statement ; but on second thoughts it seemed to her better, if the charge must be made, to have to meet it in writing, rather than by word of mouth. “Oh,” thought she, “if mamma were but here ! how can we get on without mamma !”

CHAPTER XV.

.....muttered, “Lost ! lost ! lost !”

Scott.

CONSTANCE was not engaged as Mary Anne had left her. She had quitted her desk, and was in earnest discussion with her mother and North. Charlotte was also standing by, and now Mary Anne and Grace added to the group.

Mrs. Duff had been strongly against Constance’s determination. She did not enter into the question of Jessie’s

guilt or innocence, but advised delay; the brooch might be found,—at any rate, such violent measures were unnecessary and premature. Constance found a multitude of arguments against all her mother's pleas. Delay was in fact giving up the whole; and as to the brooch being found, it was out of the question; if it was not in the dressing-case, it could be no where except in Jessie Baines's keeping;—of that Constance said she was quite certain.

It was at this point that the two new allies joined the party. North was saying to her mistress, "All that you say, ma'am, is very true and very kind, I am sure; I, in my unsuspicion, said and thought the same at Hastings, about the burglary, but now the other crime is brought home to the girl, I am for Miss Constance's view of the case."

"North and I must be right," observed Constance, "because we were both the other way. It is nothing but facts we cannot resist that have brought us over."

"The brooch is lost—lost—lost!" said North, shaking her head, almost in soliloquy; "lost beyond any power of man for recovery! There is nothing left but justice on the poor misguided thing! Poor girl! poor girl! what will her poor mother say? It will break her heart!—so young, too!"

"But North," said Grace, quietly, though with a feeling of indignation at heart almost beyond her management, "the brooch may be found. Constance, have you looked every where? Are all your boxes unpacked? You know there are some packages still to come home."

"Oh, Miss Leslie," replied North, "nothing but the grocery hampers and wine—all my own packing up! I doubt if the brooch is found there!"

"Grace thinks that we ought to have a search through all your things, Constance," said Mary Anne, laughing.

"I only think we should be quite sure before such a charge is made," said Grace.

"Sure!—sure of what?" asked Constance; "I am sure the brooch is gone, and I am sure that Jessie has taken it!"

"I only mean that we should not raise an alarm too hastily," said Grace.

"I have not been hasty, I am sure," replied Constance, "that is the last thing I ought to be accused of."

"I can testify, Miss Constance," said North, "that you and I kept it all as close as an oyster all the time we were at Hastings; but now it has all got out and is burning away like wildfire all over the place by this time; for in spite of all I could say, I heard Betsy telling the milk-man just as I came up-stairs. We can keep our own tongues in our mouths, but not those young thoughtless girls, who only think of the matter of gossip. I am so thankful to think it is no girl here, whose mother might hear the story, and perhaps go into fits. Poor thing! poor thing!—such a young creature, too! Oh, it is a sad world we live in!"

This speech of North's was broken and interrupted by remarks and questions from Mrs. Duff and her daughters.

Grace had some time ceased attempting to make any representations, as among so many she found it in vain to expect any one to be heard. She felt the subject an uncomfortable one, and it appeared less so to herself if discussed less publicly. She perceived also that North was not quite the sensible, well-judging person she had imagined; at least it appeared to her that North was somewhat unwise in some of the remarks she made during this scene, of which a very small portion is here detailed. Grace, then, unable to get any body to listen to her, consoled herself with the idea that Constance had her letter to write, and that the post did not go out till four o'clock. Before that time she hoped an opportunity would occur of her speak-

ing to Constance alone, and getting a sight of the statement of which Mary Anne had spoken, and which Constance wished every body to see. Grace therefore left as soon as she could.

After a lengthened debate, which came to nothing, Constance signified her desire of finishing her letter, from which she had been disturbed, and the room was shortly cleared.

Grace encountered North soon after in one of the passages. North was of a talkative disposition when it suited her, and without any difficulty she began a conversation with Grace.—“ Ah, Miss Leslie,” said she, “ I see how much this sad business pains and grieves you, and so it will your mamma, I am sure. To think of her being so taken in, as to recommend such a worthless girl. Oh, we have all deceitful hearts !”

“ But, North,” said Grace, “ I do not believe a word of all this ; I do not believe that Jessie has taken the brooch.”

“ Not taken the brooch, Miss !” cried North, “ then where is it ?”

“ Lost or mislaid, I suppose,” replied Grace ; “ perhaps it may appear.”

“ Lost !” exclaimed North, lifting up her hands with an expression of wonderment at Grace’s simplicity, then remembering herself and adding, “ But, Miss, you have not seen my and Miss Constance’s evidence, which makes it all out as clear as the sun at noon-day.”

“ If Jessie could take that little brooch,” continued Grace, “ which is worth a mere trifle, how was it that all our things, and particularly Miss Fanny’s trinket case, were safe for so long ? The trinket case was on the toilette table, and open all the time of Miss Fanny’s illness.”

“ Oh,” cried North, drawing up her head, “ I can’t take account of the ways of people of that sort. Murderers choose out their victims from among the low and the mean

sometimes; they have their reasons, which we cannot follow; and Jessie may have as good, as it seems to her, for stealing what you, Miss, call this trifle."

"Well, North, I hope the brooch will be found," said Grace, cheerfully, "and I dare say you hope so too."

"We must hope against hope in such cases, as dear Miss Constance says," replied North, readily, "but though we call the brooch lost, I consider it neither lost nor mislaid. Besides Miss, there's the other charge, how is the poor unfortunate girl ever to get over all this! Oh, I am sure I pity her from the very bottom of my heart."

Grace was of that perverse disposition that the more North pitied, the less she could; and she replied, that, as North had very truly observed, it was impossible to judge without having seen the evidence; and so the conference ended.

CHAPTER XVI.

..... Lady Constance, peace.

War! war! no peace! peace is to me a war.

Shakspeare.

CONSTANCE had settled herself again to her writing, but was doomed to farther interruptions. Charlotte presently re-entered, and explained to her sister that she wished to make a protest on her own account against the proposed proceedings concerning Jessie. Constance had not heard, or had not fully apprehended her sister's sentiments during the late scenes, or she did not imagine they would be strong enough to lead to such boldness of speech; therefore this new and extraordinary manifestation of character almost overpowered Constance's usual balance of mind. As soon as she fully understood her sister's object in coming,

she exclaimed, "It is very extraordinary, Charlotte, that you, who so seldom speak or interfere, should only do so to thwart or oppose those who are so much better qualified to judge than yourself."

"Constance," replied Charlotte, "I put up with inconvenience and trouble on my own account, you know, but I will not remain silent when it is a question of justice with another, especially when I feel that the whole charge has arisen from my own fault. I believe Jessie perfectly innocent of both charges."

"And I believe her guilty of both," replied Constance, "and I have proofs, and you have not. What can you do?"

"I mean first to tell Campbell," replied Charlotte.

"You know mamma does not wish it."

"That was said in haste; however I shall ask mamma first," returned Charlotte.

"And then," said Constance, "I suppose you, and Grace, and Campbell are to league together against me, to get off a dishonest girl from proper punishment."

"I shall say nothing to Grace, and I only tell Campbell that I may have the advantage of his opinion."

"Well, Charlotte, I cannot say you show much of a Christian disposition to defy your elder sisters, and to be setting a family against one another in this way."

"If you consent to delay I will do nothing at present, Constance," replied Charlotte; "but if you act against Jessie at once, I must act for her; and I tell you I will leave nothing undone to prove her innocence, which I as firmly believe as my own. I have no scruple about it, because it was I put your things under her charge. I was present all the time, and I am the most proper person to defend her."

"I should like to know what you can do!" cried Constance. "But now I must write;" and again she sat down to her writing.

Charlotte left the room, and Constance, though once

more left to herself, was so fearful of farther interruption, and so resolved on her point of getting off her packet to Mrs. Childe without delay, that she suddenly rose and retreated into an uninhabited room, carrying with her her writing materials and papers. She was wise, for very shortly Grace came, hoping to obtain an interview, and finding the room vacant, withdrew in much disappointment. Her second attempt was more fortunate; Constance was alone, and apparently at leisure.

"I come, Constance," said Grace, gently, "to hear from you yourself, exactly what all this stir is about."

"About!" cried Constance, "why surely you have heard enough! Jessie Baines has stolen my brooch!"

"Yes, to be sure, I know this was said," replied Grace; "I rather meant to ask, what are your grounds for believing it?"

"You should have seen my statement, then you would know all about it," said Constance.

Grace said that was what she desired, and that she thought perhaps it would be an advantage to Jessie that she should do so.

"Ah," said Constance, "you should have been down stairs then at the reading, this morning. It is too late now, for it is gone!"

"Gone!" cried Grace, exceedingly disappointed; "Oh, Constance, I thought—I hoped—you would let me see it first."

"I took it down for every body to see," said Constance, "I left it there for an hour; it was not my fault that you were out of the way."

"Oh, Constance," cried Grace, "I did hope you would delay. Just consider how lonely poor Jessie is just now—entirely among strangers, her aunt out of London, Hanson and her mother far away, and mamma, too, quite out of

her reach. She will not know what to do, or how to proceed."

"I am not insensible to all this, Grace," said Constance, "I rather trust, that by the failure of all human helps, she may be brought to repentance ;—my prayers for her have been to that effect. It is, indeed, grievous to see one so young, hardened to the truth, as she is ; and I look to this event, painful as it is, as being in the end a blessing to her ; that is, if she does not hide her sin. Her path is a very plain and easy one ; she has nothing to do, but to speak the truth, and confess her crime ; and then you shall see that I can be as kind to the penitent, as I am strict with the evil-doer."

"But you know, I believe Jessie innocent," said Grace. "Oh, Constance, I do think you have been over hasty."

"It is quite ridiculous for you to talk till you have seen my statement," said Constance. "You would find by that, I have neither been unkind nor hasty. You know, you and I cannot talk or act together, because our belief is different. You believe Jessie innocent, I believe her guilty. Now, what would you do if you believed her guilty?"

"I am sure I should wait, even then," said Grace ; "I should hope to find the brooch. At any rate, I would go and speak to her about it first."

"Ridiculous !" exclaimed Constance, "such matters are always best done by writing ; there is no end of talking. But it is nonsense your pretending to judge, Grace, as I said before, till you have read my statement ; then you will see how silly it is to talk of waiting to find the brooch. Besides, there is no use now to talk of delay, for the packet is gone."

"Yes, I know," said Grace, "but even if it is at the post-office, you can get it back if you send, or go yourself ; and I do hope you will, at least, let me see it before it goes."

"It is not gone by post, but by the errand-cart," said Constance ; "that, however, would be no objection, for I could walk over to Ringtown this very moment, if I thought it necessary."

"Oh, how I wish you would, with me !" cried Grace.

"But I do not think it necessary ; and, as I say, I prefer all being done by writing," returned Constance, pleased that there was an end to any more talk about delay.

Grace's heart sunk within her : she felt like one who has some task to perform, and no means of doing it. "Surely," thought she, "it is my place to help poor Jessie !"

Constance continued to explain her general principles. "I am not," said she, "one of those soft weak-hearted persons, who think that religion consists in nothing but what they call kindness and forgiveness. By our good North's persuasions, I was led to a line of conduct I now repent, and I feel I am bound to repair my error by a steady and unflinching severity, or rather justice. You call me hasty ; but suppose I wait and wait for any given time, and suppose at last it must come to this point ; what would you say then ?"

"I know offenders must be punished," said Grace, "and I know it must be some person's place to begin ; but I also know, that sometimes innocent people are suspected, and that their innocence can generally be established. One of the means to do this, is the testimony of respectable people to their general good character ; and I think Jessie should claim the benefit of this, at least, to obtain delay. Mrs. Ward and others at Langham, Mrs. Gordon, Hanson, her own aunt, and mamma, could and would in a moment speak as to her character and conduct at different times and places."

Constance smiled. "All this would avail nothing against the evidence of facts : but I respect your zeal, Grace, and regret it should be thrown away upon an unworthy object.

I grieve that I should seem to you to take such an unfeeling part. Believe me, it is nothing but duty urges me to it, and a painful one indeed I feel it. I lost nearly all my rest the last two nights, in consequence of this unhappy business. That, I think, is a proof of my sincerity."

"How sorry I am, Constance," said Grace, "but still I cannot help thinking you might spare yourself a great deal. You know, you are not the responsible person. Your mamma recommended Jessie, or rather *my* mamma; and you could so easily put the case into their hands, and escape all this pain."

"Grace," returned Constance, "I am not one of those who in a cowardly manner flinch from known duties, and throw off responsibilities upon the necks of others, especially when I know that others will sit still and fold their hands. I should call your plan a silly half mode of proceeding. In all matters, I prefer straightforward openness to delicacy and refinement."

"Certainly," returned Grace, "you do not know mamma as I do, but you may trust entirely that she would do exactly right. If Jessie were guilty, she would not shield her."

"Without any disrespect to your mamma," said Constance, "I do not believe *that*. The strength of prejudice is stronger than the force of truth, alas! in the most important of matters, and it extends to all subjects."

Grace had never felt so uncomfortable in talking to Constance as at this moment. She said nothing, however, and the other continued, "I feel in this case, that kindness, as you would call it, would be most unkind, and mercy most unmerciful. Peace here indeed would be no peace, but war;—war that would some day break out, and bring down upon me the consequences which I now am endeavouring, with my humble powers, to turn aside from all parties. Christians, Grace, must fight: this is a truth

you have to learn ; and this present case is one of those battles—painful indeed to the flesh—to be endured by the believer with hardness, as a good soldier of Christ.”

Grace was about to reply, and explain that Constance totally misapprehended her meaning, but she remembered she had done the same before unsuccessfully, and felt it owing to her own want of clearness in explaining herself. While she was considering, Constance put into her hands a manuscript Treatise on Christian Warfare, which lay very opportunely within reach. It was in her own handwriting, and was compiled, she said, from a sermon of Mr. Marjoram’s, and was intended to show how opposite is the character of the true Bible Christian to that generally received, even among professors.

This was a morning of private interviews. When Charlotte left Constance, she sought her mother, whom she found overwhelmed with curtains, in one of the bed-rooms, fatigued, heated, and chafed by the morning’s debates. She had just had a *tête-à-tête* with North, on the subject of Jessie. She thought to bring her domestic more to her own views, by so doing ; but she found North quite as determined as Constance ; and, perceiving that her two eldest daughters and North were all on one side of the question, she resolved not to interfere further, but to let matters take their course. She told Charlotte this, her resolve, and seemed somewhat vexed at her younger daughter taking part in the affair. “ If *you* mean to have an opinion now upon every thing, Charlotte,” said she, “ farewell to the little remains of peace. But so it is, when girls grow up. They think they know better than all the world.”

However, though Mrs. Duff forbade Charlotte to speak, she allowed her to do as she pleased.

Charlotte therefore sought her brother, and imparted to him the events of the last few hours. She was rejoiced to find his opinions agree with her own ; and, by his concur-

rence, she wrote a few sensible lines to Jessie, calculated to be a great comfort to one under such circumstances.

All this delay, however, made Charlotte's note too late for the daily messenger. It went by the post, in the evening. Charlotte did not mention to Grace what she had done ; after Constance's remark in the morning, and her mother's backwardness to interfere, it seemed to her better to act entirely apart from Grace.

After Grace left Constance, she was vexed with herself on remembering how little she had heard, which would be of any avail to Jessie. She did not even know what were Constance's intentions. How she wished she could go about by herself, and could set off that moment for Ringtown ; and how free and happy Constance seemed to her in such respects ! She actually revolved in her mind the possibility of such a line of action in her own case ; but, before forming any plan, she resolved to have a little talk on the subject with Mrs. Duff.

That lady was in the same frame as when just before applied to by Charlotte, and gave Grace precisely the same reply. Grace perceived that she could do nothing with any ease or comfort to her own feelings. As matters at that moment stood, any active measures were scarcely justifiable on her part, and therefore she had better wait, and see the turn events might take. She was farther strengthened in this passive course, by hearing from Mary Anne, that Constance had done nothing but send her statement to Mrs. Childe ; and that Constance wished to do every thing so openly, that she had desired Mrs. Childe to show her statement to Jessie.

"Perhaps, then," said she to Mary Anne, "Jessie may be able to satisfy Constance on the points that seem doubtful."

Mary Anne laughed.

CHAPTER XVII

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It may be remembered, that ~~she~~ ^{she} ~~was~~ ^{was} ~~not~~ ^{not} ~~at~~ ^{at} ~~all~~ ^{all} ~~in~~ ⁱⁿ ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~company~~ ^{company} ~~from~~ ^{from} ~~Mrs. Childs~~ ^{Mrs. Childs}, whether it not she was ~~in~~ ⁱⁿ ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~company~~ ^{company} ~~with~~ ^{with} ~~her~~ ^{her} ~~acquaintance~~ ^{acquaintance}. It was perceived, however, that her words were not attended to, the officers of justice, to be very soon expected. Mrs. Childs was a stout young man, and the very idea set her all on a ~~amble~~ ^{amble}; perhaps not being, as it herself had been the origin. Instead of Thomas Duff charged Mrs. Childs herself with the crime. He was likely to have gone down on her knees and begged, from very terror.

The Duffs were kind, and what is called amiable, people; they would not willingly have hurt a fly; but from want of firm principle, they were not unlikely to do the most unjust things, and even oppress the innocent. They took up the religion that was nearest to them, which happened to be the same religion as the Duffs'; at least, they admitted in common the same preachers and writers. They were good among the poor, and took an active part in societies, but entirely under the direction of—not the clergyman—but certain families and individuals, in their own and neighbouring places. Of these, the Duffs stood forward prominently.

The Children conceived the Dutch very highly for their religion, and venerated their ability; consequently, they were unwilling to offend in the least. Constance, specially, was an object of their fear and reverence. Yet,

Mrs. Childe was kind, as has been said ; and she shrunk from turning a poor young girl from her house, without a friend to go to. She thought, besides, the charge a doubtful one, and was pleased and prepossessed with what she had seen of Jessie ; but the only alternative allowed her was more terrible to her mind, namely, opposing herself to the wishes of such a family as the Duffs. She dreaded exciting their displeasure : to brave Constance's, especially, seemed more than could be expected under any circumstances. It is extraordinary that a lady, like this Mrs. Childe, with grown-up daughters older than Constance, should have been thus fearful ; but there are few, of any age or experience, but have met with similar instances. Poor Mrs. Childe, however, must decide, and must decide quickly, for the messenger left early the next morning. She sat down to think ; and a very bad headache it gave her. In the first place, it gave her a headache, and a heartache too, to have to lay the whole case before Jessie. "My dear Emma," said she to one of her daughters, "did not Constance wish me to show her statement to Jessie?"

"Yes, mamma ; but not to tell about the Bow-street officers," replied the daughter eagerly.

Mrs. Childe then asked for the papers, with trembling hand drew a pen across the two passages where the officers were mentioned, rang the bell and sent for Jessie, and desired her daughters to remain in the room during the interview, thinking their presence would be some support to her. Natural kindness dictated the simplest method of communicating the unpleasant facts to the accused. She said, "Jessie, can you read writing?" And being answered in the affirmative, gave her a note Constance had sent, and continued, "Then you had better read these papers ; Miss Constance Duff has lost a brooch, and thinks you know something about it ; these papers will explain all ; take them, and read them. Do you know any thing

kindness of yourself and your dear family not to understand at once the sentiments by which you are actuated, and the pain you feel. I cannot persuade the unhappy girl to confess her guilt ; I fear you must not expect that ; but out of consideration to her youth, and the salutary punishment she will receive, I trust you will suspend any further proceedings. It is too late to-night to take any steps, but to-morrow, without fail, I shall put your wishes into execution. With affectionate regards to all your dear family,

Believe me, &c., &c.

P.S.—How shall I return your dear mamma her fringe-frame ?—I am truly obliged by the loan.

The daily messenger arrived in Winterton just after the Duffs' breakfast. This letter was therefore received in the presence of the ladies of the family alone, Mr. Duff having gone to London, and his son being at his studies.

"Just like Mrs. Childe," exclaimed Constance, when she had read the letter, "neither one thing nor the other ! no Christian decision of character ; and the worst is, if she has a leading string held out to her, she has not the power to reach out her hand and take hold of it. Too late ! what stuff ! she waits till night, and then says, 'it is too late,' and so it will be to-morrow."

"Why should you be in such haste, Constance ?" said her mother, "remember the other affair ; it would be an awkward thing if the brooch comes to light."

"If !" exclaimed Constance, "besides, it is all of you hasten me ; you oppose so violently, that I see if I do not act with more decision even than usual, it will all die away."

"Well, and so much the better," said Mrs. Duff, "and give the poor girl another chance."

The family talk was continued for some time, but to very

little purpose. Presently a note was sent down to Constance from Miss Leslie, the servant said, who was in the painting room.

"How ridiculous Grace is!" cried Mary Anne, "why cannot she come down and speak?"

As Constance opened the note, she announced that it was not from Grace, but from Jessie Baines, in reply to one she had written, and added, that of course Jessie had been applying to Grace, regretting that she had been withheld from sending in officers, and at once putting an end to the business, which would now be protracted indefinitely. Jessie's note was as follows:—

Madam,

I have little more to say than to certify my innocence of all the charges that you bring against me. The charge of the brooch is as nothing to the idea of my letting people into the house, and robbing my mistress. But I cannot think that you and North really believe me guilty of any thing so impossible, and therefore the brooch is the heaviest, but I cannot hope, Madam, that after your opinion of me, you or North, will believe my simple word. I only trouble you with a line in answer to your request that I will confess myself guilty. This I cannot do, even if the officers carry me to prison for it.

Madam, &c.

"I suppose by this," cried Constance, after she had read the letter, "Mrs. Childe told Jessie all about the officers, though I desired her not. There is no trusting such people at all! I dare say she forgot to scratch out the passages, though I contrived it so well, and told her exactly how to manage. And what an inconsistent note of Jessie's," added she, tossing it over to the rest; "not a word of counter evidence, and nothing but disrespect towards me, and impertinence to North. Of course we shall not believe

her simple word ! she might have spared herself that passage, I think. Well, Charlotte, read the note, and see what you can say now for your *protégée*. For my part, I only see my duty plainer than ever, and get more and more resolved to expose the guilt of a girl, who, at every turn, shows such bad dispositions, in the hope of reclaiming her. No one can doubt that this must be the most merciful course."

CHAPTER XVIII.

Let her not hurt me !

* * * * *

Let her not strike me !

Shakspeare.

GRACE had again this morning early left the breakfast-table, and had betaken herself to her retreat, the painting-room, when a small packet was brought her. She supposed it was from either Hastings or Langham, forwarded from Fulham, and directed by one of the servants, for the writing was evidently from an unpractised, though neat hand. She found she was mistaken, and the same moment wondered at her slowness in not guessing that the packet came from poor Jessie, about whom at the very instant her mind was fully occupied. To her great joy, she found that Jessie had enclosed Constance's much-talked-of statement. There was also a note for Constance herself, from Jessie, which Mrs. Childe had preferred being sent in Jessie's packet. The contents of this have already been given. There was beside a letter from Jessie to Grace, which with anxious feelings Grace set herself to read immediately. The following is a copy :—

Dear and ever honoured young Lady,

I am sure you do not believe what they say of me, and you will not require me to say I am innocent, for your own heart cannot believe in such a wicked one as mine must be if I am guilty. But indeed I suffer as if I was the guilty creature they take me for. Oh, dear Miss Leslie, if it was not for your lessons, and your calmness, and my dear mistress's example of goodness, I don't think I could stand up under this hard blow. I know it was the hand of Providence guided me to you, that I might bear up under this, which otherwise would have sunk me to the dust; for when you took pity on me, I was a poor vain creature, just ready to be a prey. I did not go quite to the bottom of things, and I did not look up to heaven in the right way, and understand *how* our Saviour meant us to walk in the path He has made for us to heaven. My natural disposition is worse than other people's: I was always indolent and inclined to give up correcting my faults, except where I was made to do so by my superiors, or by the duties of my station; but these would not hold long or deep, and stand against strong temptation; and I know too well that true faith was fast declining in my heart, when some people thought I was growing more spiritual. It was very pleasing to my indolence and vanity to think so myself, while now I see the fear of man ruled me, rather than the fear of God. I was beginning to be more afraid of my superiors than I ought to be, or rather I mean I feared them in a wrong way. I thought I was right in my course of life, though I knew very often I was not right in some particular acts and words. I was afraid of the truth, and of speaking the truth, and was just in that state of heart and conscience that was ready to fall a prey, if I had been thrown among a set of bad or careless companions. As it was, I took up with the notion of one of

the servants in the house where I was, that it was enough to feel a great deal, and to receive Christ into my heart on my knees, and that all the rest would follow. I should have gone a great deal farther, led on by vanity—for they wanted me to join the meetings, and flattered me, and thought my feelings very good and religious—but that my dear mother had brought me up to keep to my church, and had made me promise her solemnly before I left her, that I never would go to a dissenting meeting, without first writing to her; and somehow or other, I could not find the heart to sit down and explain all my reasons for wishing to go to meeting to my poor mother; and besides, I knew the idea of my getting into the way of going to hear the meetings would cause her pain and sleepless nights. It was this—I mean my being kept by force, though not quite by choice, to my church—that kept me from following after the wild ways of the meetings; for I know more about them now, and can see they are not as religious and good as they seemed to be at first. If, however, I had joined them, I tremble to think what a condition I might have been in, when I came to discover the falseness of their goings on. My vanity and fear of man would have kept me in their nets, and I should have been there for life. But instead, dear Miss Leslie, Providence guided me under the care of your honoured mother, where the mists that my vanity blinded me with have been dispersing, and I trust I begin to see the true rising of the sun of righteousness, with healing in His wings. Oh, dear Miss Leslie, how can I ever be thankful enough for His goodness, which has so watched over me and protected me, while my sinful heart was going in paths far away from Him and His ways! And what a return would it be, to become the wicked one they think! And yet I know this trial is sent to me to find if my heart is really set upon heavenly

things, or not ; for I feel a pride springing up within me, which will lead me, I am afraid, to rebel against Christian meekness, and I want some one to guide me and to tell me what I ought to say and to do. I cannot, indeed I cannot, write to my poor mother while I am in such disgrace ; and Hanson is away, and my aunt, and your dear mamma—all too far off to help me as I wish ; and so I can think of nothing but to consult you, and I could not do so, without troubling you with this long account of myself for some time back, for then you can see what I am and advise me ; and I believe your great kindness, dear Miss Leslie, will excuse the strange liberty I take. Trouble, I am sure, makes all things different, and I feel a different creature since the morning. Mrs. Childe has been so kind as to let me see Miss Constance's charges against me. I believe I was not to see about the officers, but the ink was light, and the words are only plainer than before. I send you all the statement as it is : I can answer a great deal of it, but it frightens me, and I am afraid I cannot do what is right by myself. Pray, dear Miss Leslie, help me. Do not let me be a spoil. I do not know if I have written right to Miss Constance, and I want to know what I ought to do here : if I should go away and save my mistress, who is very kind, any farther trouble about me, or if I should wait till the officers come and take me to prison. I do not know what they can do with me, or if they can transport me if the brooch is not found, or if they will put me among the poor wicked creatures in a jail ; but I remember what you said one day, when we read the chapter with the verse on taking no care for the morrow, that we should walk on step by step, and think only of the one trouble or duty that is before us ; and so I do not distress myself for the future, except by trying to provide for knowing what I ought to do, when to-morrow becomes to-day. Pray, dear Miss

Leslie, excuse the haste, and faults, and boldness of this letter.

And believe me,

Your grateful humble servant,

JESSIE BAINES.

It cannot be doubted but that Grace was much moved by this letter. She blamed herself excessively for not having taken some active measures in Jessie's behalf the preceding day, though there were reasons which, at the time, seemed to render delay desirable, if not unavoidable.

She was now exceedingly shocked to find how nearly poor Jessie had been subjected to extreme distress and inconvenience ; and, indeed, that she was still on the point of being so. Grace had been satisfied and set at ease by Constance's softened manner at the close of their yesterday's interview, by her consenting to write to Jessie herself, which she had done at Grace's request, by Mary Anne's subsequent assurances of her sister's kind intentions, and by the considerate alternatives which she heard were to be presented for Jessie's acceptance. Grace perceived that herself and the Duffs put a different interpretation upon words. She now saw that she ought to have required from Constance an account of what she really meant to say and to do ; which, out of inexperience and delicacy, she had neglected to urge. It was not wonderful that one so young, and so unaccustomed to act independently, and take responsibility on herself, should hesitate before she should put herself forward to take decided steps,—especially under the peculiar circumstances in which she was placed ; but now that she was assured of what before she only imagined,—that Jessie had no friend to apply to but herself,—she felt no more scruples as to what line to take. Jessie's appeal, in itself, was quite sufficient to rouse such a mind as Grace's to ac-

tion, and render her regardless of considerations of mere diffidence or delicacy. She had now higher rules to go upon ; and though she would not disregard the others, they had become entirely subordinate. Her first impulse was to show Jessie's letter to Constance ; but on looking it over for that purpose, she gave up the idea, on several accounts.—It was so entirely addressed to herself, and much of its force and value depended upon what she already knew of Jessie ; again, she was aware that Constance was strongly impressed by the conviction of Jessie's worthlessness ; and under a prepossession of this kind, she thought that Jessie's artless confession of her former tendency to timidity, might be construed against her. But Grace was glad to be able to act on the consideration that the letter was a private one, and not proper to be shown indiscriminately, rather than to have to calculate on the expediency of the measure, as, under the latter view, she must have done.

She saw all these things stronger than ever, after a rapid perusal of Constance's statement, which filled her with a perplexity and amaze she could scarcely credit. "Surely," thought she, "the Duffs and I can scarcely have perceptions and faculties in common ! Surely this is not *evidence*, any more than the 'alternatives' Mary Anne so approved of are 'considerate and kind !' "

With a steady head, divesting herself as much as possible of the bewildering feelings, which she was sensible had intruded themselves upon her, on her first agitating reading of Constance's document, Grace sat down, resolved entirely to master its points of evidence. At the end, she felt her intention of actively befriending Jessie in no wise shaken. She saw, that though the points of evidence were petty and weak, they, like the shadow of a child at sunset, were elongated over a space sufficient to confuse and alarm one like poor Jessie—quite unaccustomed to any

such sights. No doubt Jessie's expression, "it frightens me," referred to this quality in the statement.

Grace, then, had resolved to assist Jessie; it remained for her to decide in what way.

She tried at first to content herself with the idea of merely writing; but the more she thought over it, the less did that course appear to satisfy her; while, on the other hand, the greater difficulty there seemed in the plan of a personal interview with Jessie, the stronger grew her wish to accomplish it. The distance was three or four miles; she would gladly have walked, but she saw that she could not contrive that, with propriety, either alone or in company.

CHAPTER XIX.

Strong reasons make strong actions ;—

Let us go.....

Shakspeare.

IN this undecided state she resolved to go down stairs, and see what was the aspect of matters there; remembering that most probably Constance had received her answer from Mrs. Childe, as well as from Jessie. Here she found Mary Anne and Constance, with the letters open before them, still talking over their contents.

"Well, Grace," said Constance, as she approached them, "I hope you will be satisfied now; pray read your *protégée's* letter. I suppose you will not take upon you to defend such impudence."

Grace took the letter and read, while Mary Anne continued to enlarge upon Jessie's insolent expressions and

conduct. When Grace had finished the note, Constance eagerly inquired if she did not think it very impudent.

"While we think so differently of Jessie," replied Grace, "we cannot of course agree as to her conduct; I could not object to any assertion of her innocence, while, however it is worded, it would seem improper and rude to you."

"Under her circumstances," observed Charlotte, "I should almost say it is impossible for her to write an impudent letter; and I can but wonder at you, Constance, who always like truth perfectly undisguised."

"I hope I should not object to faithful rebuke from any Christian," returned Constance, "whether free or under the yoke; but that is a very different thing from a girl of this kind charging me with falsehood direct."

"But, Constance," said Charlotte, "what is she to do? Just fancy her innocent!"

"I cannot fancy her innocent," cried Constance, "it would be as senseless to do so as to fancy a condemned criminal innocent."

"And that proves only what I began with, Constance," continued Grace, "that you and I cannot come to any agreement in this case as to what is right or wrong, or proper or improper for Jessie to say and do."

"Why, Constance," said Charlotte, whose character seemed in a moment altogether changed, "suppose any person now were to accuse you of making this charge against Jessie, knowing it to be false, for the sake of getting her into the penitentiary you are wishing to establish, what would you say?"

"That is nothing to the purpose," replied Constance; "and I do think, Charlotte, you are behaving in this instance in a most extraordinary manner. I do not wonder so much at Grace, though I think her quite blinded and deceived by prejudice, and by the artfulness of the girl, but you ought to know better, or to be silent."

"I do not mean to be silent, Constance," continued Charlotte, "and I really wish you to answer me. What would you say if any one charged you with bearing false witness, and that knowingly?"

"I should pity them, forgive them, and pray for them," returned Constance, in a somewhat compulsory tone.

"Yes, but what would you *say* in reply?" pursued Charlotte.

"I should say they were under a mistake," replied the sister.

"Then that is just what Jessie has said," continued Charlotte, "only she feels more at being supposed guilty than you now; as she ought, because the charge against her is real, and that against you imaginary."

Constance again rebuked her sister for her behaviour, but Charlotte was not to be repressed: she continued, "You must remember, Constance, that this case is not like a quarrel. It is not that there may be *some* fault on her side; she must be entirely right or entirely wrong, either guilty or innocent; and if she is the latter, she is bound to assert it, and that even though she cannot prove it."

Constance hardly knew how to talk upon equal terms to a younger sister, who had always kept in the back ground; and after a repetition of her former remarks, she withdrew, considering her sister very troublesome in word, but not capable of being so in deed.

Grace had left the room during the debate between the sisters. After Constance's remarks on Jessie's letter, she resolved to go at once to Ringtown and see Jessie and Mrs. Childe, however unused she was to such matters of business, and she sought Mrs. Duff to communicate her intention; not that she expected to be allowed to do so without some discussion, for her hostess considered Grace under her care, and showed herself in many ways disposed

to exercise a more vigilant *surveillance* over Grace than over her own daughters. Grace thoroughly disliked and dreaded the interview she was about to seek, and would have escaped it by any possible sacrifice ; but she trusted to the goodness of her cause, and tried to forget all disagreeables till they should actually arrive. This however did not prevent her heart beating faster than usual, as she laid her hand on the handle of the door where she knew Mrs. Duff was engaged superintending hanging up curtains and arranging furniture.

Grace had summoned up much more courage than the occasion required. She did not aim at managing Mrs. Duff, as Mary Anne had done at a similar crisis, for that was not at all her way. Mrs. Duff was busy, and did not wish for a long discussion on a subject she had been already teased enough about : she was desirous that Constance should be checked in her proceedings, and she was pleased with Grace's mode of referring to herself, and taking trouble and responsibility off her hands. She also wanted Grace to bring back from Mrs. Childe a certain fringe machine, of which mention was made in Mrs. Childe's note. All these considerations combined made Grace's task comparatively an easy one, though she had some arguments to combat. Grace however could not herself see at all clearly Mrs. Duff's own view, for after that lady had consented to the scheme, she added, " Well, if you will go, I cannot prevent you, but I shall tell your mamma it was entirely your own plan."

" Entirely my own ; pray say so," returned Grace. " Indeed I have told her so already, and mean to send my letter from Ringtown." So saying, she glided swiftly through the entangling coils of drapery and cords which lay on the floor, waiting the summons of the upholsterer ; and she felt happy that her dreaded interview had proved so well timed ; for just as it ended, she was reminded of its sin-

gular good fortune, by perceiving that North had entered the room. It struck her that North was likely to object to her proceedings, and that North's opposition was to be dreaded ; she wondered that this obstacle had so entirely escaped her. On the stairs, she met one of the nursery-maids, Martha, who had been at Hastings, and to her she gave directions about ordering such a carriage as she wanted, to go to Ringtown. This maid was fully acquainted with all that was going on, perhaps more thoroughly than Grace herself. It so happened that she, as well as most of the servants, were on Jessie's side ; or possibly it would be as correct to say, were against North ; for North, as has been observed, was no favourite ; and this maid chose to disapprove of her behaviour to Jessie, during their Hastings visit. She was also better acquainted with the ways and doings of the household than Grace, who was not at all aware of the good offices she rendered her. There was a sort of mystery in Martha's manner, which Grace was at a loss to account for ; a hurrying her out of the house, scarcely allowing her time to put on her bonnet and gather together her papers, then escorting her rapidly to the small garden-gate, where the carriage was awaiting her.

Grace wondered at these things, but said nothing, and passively took her seat.

Before she had driven away two minutes, North came down, in great haste, with a message for Miss Leslie, to whom her mistress wished to speak *immediately*. North had been seeking Miss Leslie above and below, but found she was too late ; Grace was already out of the house, and as Martha said, was miles on her way to Ringtown. North was very much displeased with Martha ; but Grace was unconscious of all this, and of the disturbance and discussion her journey raised in the kitchen department.

Grace felt in some disquietude when she found herself

alone, in a carriage of her own hiring, and on an expedition of her own devising. She had doubts on the present, and fears for the future; but she felt sure that her mother would quite approve of her taking up Jessie's cause, and pardon her if she had not discovered the best method of assisting her suppliant. As she approached Ringtown, she became more alive to the awkward part she had chosen for herself; yet she had a good reason to give both to herself and others, for what otherwise might have been a great piece of impertinence; and therefore there was no real need of embarrassment or timidity. Grace found all this by experience, rather than by reflection, as soon as her interview began. The moment she spoke, all her doubts and fears seemed to have vanished, or rather, she never thought of them till she was alone again, and on her return to Winterton. Being so complete a novice in such proceedings, she had taken the precaution of writing a short note to Mrs. Childe, which she sent in with her card. The Duffs would have called all this very formal, but it was a great relief to Grace, and made her interview easy and without effort.

CHAPTER XX.

There's little of the melancholy element in her.

Shakspeare.

MRS. CHILDE was a person of quiet affectionate manner—rather languid—not at all one calculated to inspire fear, and her daughters less so. She seemed rather pleased than otherwise at Grace's call, as well as at her interfe-

rence on Jessie's behalf. There was a visitor in the room, a Miss Fuller, who was waiting at Mrs. Childe's door for admittance, when Grace drove up. To this young lady Grace was now introduced as a friend and guest of the Duffs, with whom it was evident Miss Fuller was acquainted.

"How clever the Duffs are!" observed one of the Miss Childes to Grace, after a few introductory sentences had passed.—"Do you not think them astonishingly clever?"

"I think it must be such a privilege to be staying in their house! I quite envy you, Miss Leslie," continued the other sister—Emma; "only I am always afraid of such clever people. Constance Duff, too, is so good and religious, and Mrs. Duff such a remarkably clever woman."

"They are most amiable people, indeed," added Mrs. Childe.

"Are you not afraid of them, Miss Leslie?" asked the eldest sister; "I am always so dreadfully afraid of such clever people, I can never open my lips."

Grace smiled, and answered, that at any rate her fear had not that effect upon herself; that she thought it was impossible *not* to talk in the Duff family.

"But you know they are so particular," continued Miss Childe, "one or other always catches up every word one says, for some reason or other."

"Yes, they do, certainly," said Grace, who had not noticed as a fault that they did so; "but I rather like it than otherwise."

"How very odd!" exclaimed the young lady; "I think it so very unpleasant; it makes you look so foolish!"

"Oh, but it gives one something to talk and think about," said Grace; "and if one does not agree, it causes a pleasant discussion."

"Not agree!" exclaimed Miss Childe, in amaze, "do you ever disagree with the Duffs?"

"I suppose nobody could ever agree with her," said Miss Fuller, "and besides, the Duffs do not always agree," cried Grace.

"But I mean Constance, of course," continued Miss Fuller.

"I never say you differ with her, do you?"

"No, I do differ, what can I do?" said Grace, with a shrug.

But she had not got over the feeling of being misunderstood, and not agreeing with Constance.

"I should never say I differed with Constance," said Miss Fuller, almost shrieking.

"What?" cried Miss Leslie!

"What?" cried the stranger, in a friendly tone. "The world is indebted to you, and I feel particularly so, for daring to speak your mind before any of us. As you must know, we all dislike them, but are so cowardly we dare not oppose them, nor open our lips against them except behind their backs, when we make up for our cowardice by abusing them as far as our conscience will let us; and that is some, though a poor satisfaction."

"What?" cried Miss Childe, glancing at Grace, "what a strange and droll!"

"Every one at present is quite serious.—Come now, Grace, don't you think them monstrous disagreeable?"

"What?" exclaimed Miss Childe, in a deprecatory tone, glancing again at Grace.

"Miss Leslie won't tell, I can see that by her face," said Miss Fuller. "Come, say at least you are glad to see her as she is.—Now, don't you breathe more freely?"

"What would it prove that Miss Childe thought her disagreeable?" said Grace, who was not sorry to see the conversation, as well as to relieve poor Miss Leslie.

"You are very charitable, Miss Leslie," cried the offender, "and I respect you, but I also respect Miss Childe, and her good-fellowship: you are a stranger

here, and cannot half estimate it, for I believe I am the only creature that dare ever speak a word against Constance Duff before her face ; and when I do, we only come to a quarrel, and dislike each other more and more ; so I have left it off lately."

She spoke with that sort of liveliness, that it was impossible for a stranger, like Grace, to tell how matters really stood between the parties, and Grace replied, " I should very much suspect that you and Constance are the best friends in the world, but that you love to keep up a little pet disputation."

" Ah, I see you are very charitable !" said Miss Fuller ; " but come, now I shall put *you* to the question ! Don't you think it very cowardly to praise people up to the skies to their faces, and allow all that is disparaging of them behind their backs ?"

" Not very honest, I think," replied Grace, as much in her questioner's tone as possible.

" Well, that is what I am always telling people, but I can't get them to attend ! Do you hear, Jane and Emma ? —not honest ! Now you know I quarrel with Constance to her face, and we know we hate each other, so I can abuse her behind her back with a safe conscience."

" You are such a droll creature, Julia !" exclaimed the Miss Childes.

Grace thought so also, and was much amused by a manner which was quite new to her.

" But now," continued the young lady, rising, " I shall go ! I know you have business with Miss Leslie, and I can keep my gossip till to-morrow."

" Oh, no, my dear, good Julia !" cried Mrs. Childe, detaining her young friend ; " you shall not go, I want you to help me in my troubles, and I want too to hear all about poor dear Mrs. Boodle. You must indeed stay to luncheon ;

and Miss Leslie," added she, turning to Grace, "I dare say is not in a hurry."

Grace assured her she could very well wait till Mrs. Childe was at liberty.

"Well, then, my dear," continued Mrs. Childe to Julia, "pray do tell us first about the poor Boodles; how are they this morning?"

"Oh, in a sad state, miserable enough!" returned Miss Fuller; "yet not quite so bad as usual either; but poor Mrs. Boodle was in tears all the time I was there!"

"Ah, poor thing!" exclaimed Mrs. Childe, "no wonder.—Of course its all true?"

"Oh, quite true; you know they make no secret of their family affairs, and they talked the business over quite openly with me."

"Well, and what is the story? has he been passing by a false name all this time at Cheltenham?"

"Yes, and such an unaccountable one!" replied Miss Fuller; "for my part, I wonder it could pass at all with any one; though, after all, it is no worse than Boodle, only we are so used to that. They think he will actually be married now, at last; and it seems quite a relief to poor Mrs. Boodle, she hopes it may settle him at last."

Grace could not but listen, though she knew none of the parties; the circumstances reminded her so much of Mr. Guppy, that if it had but been Hastings, instead of Cheltenham, she would have felt extraordinary anxiety.

"And who is he going to marry?" asked Mrs. Childe.

"Oh, the same widow, the rich widow they say," continued Miss Fuller; "she has nothing but money I believe to recommend her, but he has been courting her ever so long at Cheltenham, and is to be the successful suitor at last out of a hundred others; at least, so he says, but one never knows how to believe a word."

"And has he been courting her under his false name?" asked Miss Childe; "how odd!"

"Why, I can't make that out; he declares not, but I am sure he has been going by a false name somewhere, because Mrs. Boodle is quite sure that his aunt's letter reached him, and was the cause of his coming to them on Saturday. Oh, I believe he did not deny at all his assuming a name, but said he was forced to it by unhappy causes."

Grace thought more and more of Mr. Guppy's case.

"Then there was no truth in the last report we have heard, that he was at Hastings," said Mrs. Childe.

"By the bye, Miss Leslie," interposed her daughter Emma, "you have been at Hastings with the Duffs, did you chance to hear or see any thing of a person calling himself Guppy, who was dashing about in great style?"

Poor Grace, though the way had been somewhat prepared for this news, felt at the moment of certainty as if she had been actually shot. She was hardly conscious however of turning very pale as she answered, "Yes, we saw such a person—Mr. Guppy, a good deal; but he was living very quietly, and not dashing about at all."

"Oh, then he dashed about at Cheltenham," said Miss Fuller, carelessly; "he can be quiet enough when it suits him."

"Who and what is he really?" asked Grace, as composedly as she could.

"He is the son of our neighbours here, Mr. and Mrs. Boodle, good sort of people, of no pretensions, who are always in trouble about him, and I think he will be the death of his mother before he has done. I am sure I wonder she can care for such a good-for-nothing fellow."

"Ah, my dear," said Mrs. Childe, "she is his mother; you young people do not understand that."

"Well, I have no patience with any of them, though I

pity them, and have been crying with them over their troubles for an hour. I could not help it really, they were all in such distress, but they ought not to make so much of him. I really think poor Mrs. Boodle does very wrong. She was begging Barbara to write him a letter of congratulation and gossip, just as if nothing had happened. Barbara said she must wait a few days before she could write to him as usual, but her mother was quite vexed, and said that if they appeared to resent what had passed, it would drive him to be worse than ever."

"Well and very true, my dear, so it would," said Mrs. Childe, "and I dare say break up all connexion with him and his new wife, and she such a prodigious fortune!"

"Stuff and nonsense!" cried Julia, "I don't care what it would do! If she were an angel, and married such as he, she would be no loss."

"Ah, my dear," said Mrs. Childe, "that is the way you young people talk!"

"Well, if I live to be as old as Methuselah," cried Miss Fuller, "I never mean to like such as Obadiah Boodle!"

"Oh, Julia, you forget what a handsome young man he is, and how agreeable he can be," said Miss Childe.

"Well, you know I always escaped being blinded by his fascinations," cried Miss Fuller, "for I avoided all parties wherever I knew he was; and if I met him by chance, I sat with my back—so—to him."

Every body laughed at Miss Fuller's picture of herself. "I do think it is a shame," continued she, "for all the young ladies here to be hoping and longing to see and be noticed by a young man who is a disgrace to his family, and gives them so much pain."

"You must remember, my dear," observed Mrs. Childe, "that his family always wish us to receive him, and would be very much hurt if we took any notice of what has past."

"Well, and I think it a mistake," continued Miss Ful-

ler, "and I am determined I will always sit—so—to all such people who come in my way. Now, Miss Leslie, what do you say to that?"

"I quite agree with you," replied Grace, smiling at so vivid a representation of her own feeling, "but," out of tenderness to Fanny, she added, "I must feel somewhat different from you, since I have known this gentleman under such different circumstances."

"Now I wonder if this Obadiah Boodle was flirting with any body at Hastings!" exclaimed Miss Fuller; "I should not wonder, for he never cares how many such negotiations he has on his hands at the same time, and they say, this good substantial Widow Grange is the forlorn hope in every thing but money."

Grace felt it exceedingly embarrassing and painful to enter into such a discussion. The entrance of the luncheon-tray made a diversion for the present, and in the disarrangement it occasioned, Grace took the opportunity of turning to Mrs. Childe, and speaking of Jessie's affair.

"Ah, poor girl!" cried Mrs. Childe, kindly, "I am very sorry for her, I am sure, and shall be glad if you can befriend her."

"How different," thought Grace, "people speak and write. Mrs. Childe called Jessie 'the unhappy girl,' in her note.

"Oh, pray do not go," repeated Mrs. Childe to Miss Fuller, as she was again preparing to take her leave; "pray stay and take luncheon; we are only going to talk over my troubles, and I should like you to be present."

"Well, I will willingly," said Miss Fuller, frankly, "if Miss Leslie has no objection."

Grace assured her on that point, and could do so very safely, since from what she had seen of this Miss Fuller, she was inclined to think her presence would be a great advantage.

"Well, I was not quite sure of you," said the young lady to Grace, after the relative position of parties had a little come out in conversation; "I did not know whether you were not of the Duff faction; and if so, perhaps I could not have stayed to fight with you, as a stranger, with decency."

During luncheon, Miss Fuller ran over Constance's statement, and as she read, continually betrayed symptoms of impatience and contempt at the poverty of the charges. "Oh," cried she, "I see it all in a minute, and we shall prove in no time the absurdity and folly of this long rigmarole. It is nothing but words and sentences strung together," continued she, "a mere scarecrow, enough to frighten a poor young bird, but not to alarm old ones, like us."

Grace was pleased at a stranger seeing the evidence in the same light as herself had done, and some sympathetic acknowledgment escaped her.

"Oh, don't think me too good," cried Miss Fuller; "to be sure I believe in the poor girl's innocence, but I am also only too well pleased to find myself once again *vis à vis* to Constance Duff. But, Mrs. Childe, what do you mean to do?—surely you don't mean to turn a poor innocent out, at Constance Duff's bidding! Oh, no! you are not so weak as that; at least, if you are, I can tell you I shall sit—so—to you for the next six months!"

"My dear girl," cried Mrs. Childe, half amused and half shocked, "now don't make us laugh, it is a serious matter."

"To be sure it is," continued the young lady, "it is a matter of justice, as you may see by the trouble Miss Leslie is taking about it, and you positively must not give up young Jessie into their hands. You came to say this, did you not, Miss Leslie?"

"I came rather to ask what Mrs. Childe meant to do," replied Grace.

"Oh, nonsense!" cried Miss Fuller, laughing, "we do not talk in that way here! we all tell one another what to do;—don't we, Mrs. Childe? It saves a world of trouble, and Mrs. Childe is waiting to hear—now, are you not?"

"Oh, my dear, you always persuade me into any thing," answered Mrs. Childe.

"Yes, but now I know you wish to be persuaded, so I shall not have any trouble about it," returned Miss Fuller; "now, come, ask Miss Leslie what she would advise, and if her opinion agrees with mine, do as we tell you, without any more ado. Now, Miss Leslie, would you advise Mrs. Childe to send Jessie adrift—to turn her out of the house this very hour?"

"No, indeed!" replied Grace.

"There, Mrs. Childe," cried Miss Fuller, "you hear Miss Leslie's opinion; no doubt her mamma's would be the same; and what will she say, and Mr. and Mrs. Ward, and Mrs. General Ward, and Lord and Lady Musgrove, and Lady Penny and Sir Hector, when they come to know what you have done to their favourite maid! Why, if they bring an action against you, what will become of you?"

"Oh, Julia, you are in jest, my dear!" exclaimed Mrs. Childe, in some slight alarm; "they could not bring an action—impossible!"

"But I don't think it at all impossible," returned Miss Fuller. "I don't exactly know how the law stands, but I know it goes very far in cases of defamation, and especially protects servants from loss of character to the very utmost."

"Do *you* think they could bring an action against me, Miss Leslie, if I send Jessie away?" asked Mrs. Childe; "surely your mamma would not!"

"I know nothing of the law," replied Grace, "but I am

sure mamma will protect and defend Jessie till the truth is made manifest."

"You see, Mrs. Childe," continued Miss Fuller, "you get no good from questioning Miss Leslie. Now, there's a good dear lady, consent at once, and let the poor innocent remain under your roof."

"But, my dear Julia, I shall have the Bow-street officers down here, and my house get the name of harbouring a thief—you don't consider!"

"Well, I see you are in a dilemma," replied the young lady, "you may thank Constance Duff for that. You must, as you say, suffer one way or another; but you know the Bible says, 'better suffer for well doing than evil doing.' Constance Duff could not preach to you better than that."

These allusions to Constance were unfortunate for Miss Fuller's cause; they reminded Mrs. Childe of Constance's requisitions, and presently she also remembered that she had promised to follow Constance's directions.

Miss Fuller having gained some steps, was determined to pursue her advantage alone; and in the meantime thought it advisable to propose Grace's interview with Jessie. Grace gladly availed herself of it, as she perceived she could do little or nothing with Mrs. Childe, and that her unknown coadjutor was much more persuasive than herself.

CHAPTER XXI.

..... With that her mortal spear
She mightily adventured towards one,
And down him smote, ere well aware he were,
Then to the next she rode and down the next did bear.

Spenser.—B. III. C. 1. St. xxviii.

IN her interview with Jessie, Grace learned many facts ; one was, Constance's reiterated directions to Mrs. Childe, by that morning's post, to expel Jessie the house, on the spot ; another, Mrs. Childe's actual intention of so doing. This lady had that morning informed Jessie that she must so act, and had offered to find her a respectable home, with an old servant of hers, for a week, till either she chose to return to her mother, or found another place. Jessie remarked that it was kind in Mrs. Childe to make this proposal ; but her own desire was, to avail herself of none of such offers, while Mrs. Childe acted as if she doubted her innocence.

"My mistress has told me, ma'am," said Jessie, to Grace, "that she does not believe me guilty. I have a feeling that won't let me accept her kindness. If Mrs. Childe was so kind as to befriend me entirely, it would be different ; I want you to tell me if this is a pride I ought to get over ; I should like to go away, if you would advise it."

"I think, Jessie," replied Grace, "I would have you stay where you are, as long as you can,—it seems quite your place to do so. If you are obliged to leave, I have a plan for you, which I know you will not dislike ; but I hope Mrs. Childe will change her mind,—I think it likely she will."

Jessie was much consoled by the rest of this part of her conversation with Grace. She discovered, or rather, implied, by Grace's replies, that neither herself nor her mamma would have acted as either Constance or Mrs. Childe had done, and the sense of this was the greatest of comforts to one in her situation. It allayed the irritation of suffering under injustice; and Jessie's spirit revived, as though a load had been removed from her heart. "I shall care for none of them, now," said she, as she dried her tears, "I have so many kind friends, who will see justice done me."

Grace very gently objected to the expression, "none of them," advising Jessie not to give way to feelings that might lead her very wrong; and she went on to remind her, that under the possibility of her being guilty, those whom she had just called her enemies, would be her true friends. Jessie could not throw aside the sense of her innocence far enough to enter into the philosophy of this remark, but she promised to guide her feelings and expressions according to Grace's gentle advice.

Another fact Grace now learned was, that Charlotte had written a note, as above related, and moreover that it contained a half sovereign, with a direction to the house of a kind widow, in case Jessie should be driven to need such a refuge. It was the very first sympathy poor Jessie had received, and she spoke of Charlotte's kindness with tears. Grace did not, however, forget more important matters in sympathy, and she was obliged to summon up all her powers of head for the occasion.

On the second reading of Constance's statement, and during her drive to Ringtown, Grace had drawn up a list of the charges against Jessie; and, divested of the opinion and feelings which occupied so large a portion of the ground, the appearance of the document was by no means formidable. Grace herself was surprised to see in what small compass the evidence lay. In the first place, there

was not an atom of actual evidence to prove that Jessie went down stairs at all, on the night the house was stated to have been entered, much less that she let any body into it. It was true that North's assertion of hearing some one at the door, had some little weight in it ; and it would be most desirable to explain the incident, whatever it might be. But even if this could not be satisfactorily done, surely there was no cause for uneasiness. North's evidence on this point was very doubtful ; she confessed herself all but asleep ; and she negatived her whole testimony, as far as regarded Jessie, by stating that the person went round to the other side of the room. Jessie was not able to give any evidence on this point ;—the other servants might perhaps. The remaining charges seemed to Grace far more meagre and weak ; but she thought it right to meet them with counter statements from Jessie's own mouth ; and, after a long talk over them, she drew up the following paper.

*Jessie Baines, in reply to Miss Constance Duff and
Susan North's statement.*

1. I came up late on Tuesday night, the 22nd of June. North was gone to bed. I remembered the book Miss Leslie had given me ; I was to look out some texts before the next morning. I knew Miss Leslie meant to be up very early, and I did not wish to disturb her by going for it into the drawing-room ; besides, I did not like Miss Leslie to know that I had forgotten my book. I was afraid to go down by myself, and asked Martha, the nursery maid, to go down with me. Hanson advised us not to do so, for fear of alarming the family, as it was later than usual. I did not go ; we neither of us went. Martha and I then began to talk of thieves, and she told me some strange stories. Hanson said we were silly girls, to frighten ourselves about thieves ; if she thought there was

danger of thieves, she would advise us to go down. After this, I went to sleep. I remember North, next morning, when I awoke, was standing at the room door, talking with Martha, and ready to go down stairs. As I woke, she turned round and spoke to me, saying something about gossiping girls being fond of bed. I knew she hinted at our talking the last night. Soon after, she left the room.

2. When I heard them talk in the kitchen of thieves, in the course of this day, I felt very much frightened, especially when I remembered how very nearly I had gone down stairs; but this report soon passed by, and I did not know that any one really believed that the house had been entered.

3. I met Miss Constance on the stairs, on the evening of Saturday, the 26th of June. Miss Constance had often spoken to me, during that first week we were at Hastings. She wished me to go to Mr. Badcock's meeting with North, as Kitty had done. I told her, I had promised my mother not to go without telling her. Miss Constance wished me to write, and offered to write for me. I did not like so often to refuse a young lady like Miss Constance, and I was afraid of meeting her. I know I tried to avoid her that evening, for it was Saturday, and I thought she was sure to wish me to go to Mr. Badcock's the next day. But she spoke to me only of the rooms and beds, and I thought did not seem pleased with me. I believed it was because I would not go to Mr. Badcock's, and never once thought of the coral brooch.

4. North spoke first of the coral brooch in the kitchen, and I said it was like one that my cousin gave to the young woman he was going to marry. After this the brooch was often talked of among the servants, because North and Hanson could never agree upon it. North said one day that Miss Constance meant never to wear it again, and after that I observed that she did not. On Saturday last,

after my box was corded, and I was just going to take leave of Miss Grace, Martha came and told me I was not to go by the coach, but to accompany the family to London. They left Hastings quite suddenly, and I immediately packed up Miss Grace's boxes. I had before done Mrs. Leslie's, ready for the wagon, so I got through quicker than the rest of the servants; and when I came to the room where Miss Leslie was helping Miss Charlotte, they both directed me to assist, and I packed up Miss Constance's boxes and dressing-case. It was a large one, and Miss Charlotte laughed and said something droll about the quantity it held, for they had given me particular orders to pack well, and I took great pains. I observed the coral brooch was not in it. Miss Leslie had left the room, or perhaps I should have asked her about it; but I did not know Miss Charlotte's ways as well, and was afraid she might think my speaking impertinent, as I knew Miss Constance was particular; so I said nothing. This is all I can say. The reason I observed so particularly the brooch was not there, was because I saw the white neck-ribbon; it was one that must have been in the great storm, for it was cockled from rain. I observed this, and thought perhaps Miss Constance had put on another, and had got her brooch in it; but I thought not, because North had said that Miss Constance meant never to wear it again, and that Miss Constance always kept to her word. I wish Hanson to be applied to, and Martha at Mrs. Duff's to be examined, before they hear what I say.

JESSIE BAINES.

Grace had a good deal of talk with Jessie, on points connected with the papers before them. Jessie gave an account of the passages which occasionally passed between herself and North, where North offered advice as to her religious course. It seemed that Hanson never approved of

North's counsel and sentiments, and Jessie was always glad to let her two seniors discuss such matters. However Jessie never changed her ways so as to please North in these respects, and constantly declined to accompany Kitty to meetings of any sort. It appeared that the Wednesday and Friday services at the church were very unacceptable to North; she seemed more vexed at Hanson and Jessie attending these, as often as they could, than at their abstaining from Mr. Badcock's meetings. She also disapproved of the sermons at the church. Hanson and she constantly disputed over this subject; Hanson holding that North could not properly object to them, since she had never heard one, and North as resolutely defending her opinion by asserting, that if the preacher was good for any thing, he would not be hid under a bushel, but would be hand and glove with Mr. Badcock. Jessie was always brought in at these controversies, for North announced her wish of doing something for "that poor young thing." She knew, she said, "old foxes was not to be caught," and so always looked more to the young ones, and was encouraged, she said, by seeing the fruit of her labours already, in the change she had effected in Kitty.

All this and much more proved to Grace, that there had been much opposition going on in the kitchen department, all the time they were at Hastings. She remembered Emily and Ellen's talk about their respective nurses, and she suspected, considering what she had latterly seen of North, that the proceedings against Jessie might be in some degree influenced by prejudice; and that even old differences with Hanson might act so as to urge North on, without due consideration of the actual state of the case. But Grace considered that after all this was only opinion, and perhaps only her own opinion, and she observed how lightly she herself had treated in Constance's statement all that was of a merely conjectural character. She therefore

made no use of this part of Jessie's evidence, except that she noticed in the account of the conversation upon the staircase, the cause of Jessie's visible reluctance to meet Constance. Grace also questioned Jessie upon an idea of hers as to the fate of the brooch, but as this also was a fancy of her own, unsupported by evidence, she made no mention of it. She had been sanguine, hoping that she could extract from Jessie something to favour her notion ; for had she found any grounds for her idea, it was her plan to write a few lines to Emily at Hastings concerning it after she had concluded her examination of Jessie, and Emily, being on the spot, could have entered into an immediate investigation. But in this scheme Grace was quite foiled. Miss Fuller twice disturbed this conference. The first time she came in to beg that she might see Constance's statement again, and Jessie's reply, the very earliest moment that Grace could part with them. Grace accordingly took them in to her as soon as she had concluded her talk with Jessie on the subject connected with these papers. Miss Fuller's second interruption was, at Mrs. Childe's kind request, to summon Grace to luncheon ; as it now was getting so late, that Mrs. Childe feared her visitor would be quite famished. Grace followed her summoner immediately into the next room, as she had now entirely concluded all the business part of her interview with Jessie. She found the ladies there still full of the subject that had been so engaging herself. The table, in spite of the luncheon-tray, was spread all over with the papers she had committed to Miss Fuller's care. That young lady had been busily occupied in writing, and seemed to have been examining the documents with as much care as Grace herself. She immediately sat down again, and continued to write at a rapid pace, while Grace took something for luncheon. But Miss Fuller was one of those who can think, write, and talk at the same time, and while intent on her

occupation, she presently broke in upon some indifferent remark of Miss Emma Childe's, by exclaiming, "Of course this young Jessie is a pretty girl!"

She was answered in the affirmative.

"Ah, so I should have guessed," returned Miss Fuller, "even if I had not had a glimpse of her just now. That is at the bottom, depend upon it! that sour visaged North has a spite against all pretty servants—she hates them, and would turn them all into chimney-sweeps if she could; and as to Constance, she would have every thing as ugly as her own dress. I do think it a shame for a fine young woman like her to disfigure herself as she does! what a difference between Fanny and her! and both as children were so like, one could not tell them apart."

"Constance Duff does make herself very ridiculous about her dress," observed Miss Childe; "I should be afraid to go about as she does, so tall as she is too!"

"It is from economy I think, as well as love of plainness," observed Grace.

"Stuff and nonsense!" cried Miss Fuller; "it is from indolence and love of singularity; she spends a great deal more on her dress than I do."

"Still if it is right to dress plain, I admire Constance for not caring to be singular."

"Would you do as she does?" asked Miss Fuller, bluntly.

"If I thought it right—perhaps I would—some day," replied Grace, with agreeable frankness and diffidence.

"Well, I am glad you do not think it right *now*," returned Miss Fuller; "though I do not know but that I should give *you* leave to do as you please."

"I am sure you are very kind," replied Grace, laughing, "but why?"

"In consideration of your having taken part once in your life against Constance Duff," answered Miss Fuller.

In a short time Miss Fuller had come to an end in her writing, and addressing Grace said, "My friends have been here explaining to me the circumstances of your late visit to Hastings, and I find that some of your party, and especially Hanson, Jessie's friend, is still there."

Grace assented, and Miss Fuller went on to say, she had been copying out Jessie's reply, and adding a few remarks of her own, as she perceived that Grace had not time. And she urged most strongly sending the whole packet, namely, Constance's statement, Jessie's reply, such letters as had passed, and any remarks Grace could add, by that day's post. "It will just reach them in time for them to make any enquiries," added she, "before they leave Hastings."

"But such a large packet, Julia!" observed Miss Childe, eyeing the table covered with papers.

"Oh, it will squeeze up to nothing," replied Miss Julia; "never mind the postage, if we can buy truth and justice for a few shillings, and have got them in our pockets, we are well off."

Grace was very much pleased with this idea of her new ally; she had thought of writing to Emily, as before-mentioned, and applying for Hanson's evidence, but not of sending the whole evidence. At Miss Fuller's bidding she sat down at once to add any hints or observations, that might be likely to help Hanson and Emily in their investigation; meanwhile Miss Fuller was resolved apparently to make one last grand appeal to Mrs. Childe's feelings. She said she positively would not hear of Mrs. Childe turning out Jessie; that her father, she was sure, would willingly receive the persecuted girl into his house, but that would not be the same thing as Mrs. Childe's support and countenance. Grace here looked up from her writing, and ventured to put in a word on Mrs. Childe confessing her belief in Jessie's innocence. "We should speak very differently," said she, "if you thought Jessie guilty; but while you be-

lieve her innocent as we do, I think you can never regret your kindness to her."

"But, my dear girls, you do not consider," replied the alarmed lady, "they will come and search the house, and all our things will be turned upside down. What will become of us all?"

"Oh, horrid!" cried the Miss Childes, "indeed, mamma, we must send off Jessie, though I am very sorry for her, poor girl."

"Now that is just what I don't like you for," cried Miss Fuller, "because it is neither more nor less than humbug; if you are really sorry for Jessie, you would not think of your trumpery in comparison with her character. And if these officers do come, which I think most unlikely, I'll tell you what I'll do for you; I'll come and stand over them while you go to papa's, over the way, and I'll put every thing exactly as it was before, and you shall not know whether they have touched a thing. But to speak seriously, I don't think they would come after all this stir, they must know that if Jessie had the brooch, she would have thrown it over the bridge into the river long ago."

"Oh, how I wish we could prove she was seen throwing something away there!" cried Miss Childe.

Her friend rebuked her for this wish, and continued her persuasions. Mrs. Childe was a person equally weak in her decisions for good or evil. This cannot be said for all weak persons, and is rather a compliment for this style of character; for, by some charm or infatuation, weak minds can be led to wrong, by teasing, by persuasion, or by artifice; but by no means to right. In the present case, poor Mrs. Childe was in a dilemma; she was afraid of Constance Duff at a distance, and rather afraid, and a good deal tormented, by Julia Fuller close at hand. Besides this, she had an affection for Julia, and liked her lively bantering ways; she liked to be told by this young lady, that "she

would be very angry with her"—"not speak to her"—"be ashamed of her"—if she did not do so and so. Altogether, she liked to be guided; and Julia promised her to come over, direct her in every step, and that she should have no trouble in the matter, except copying out such notes as Julia herself would dictate to Constance. In this mood Julia got an explicit promise made to Grace, that Mrs. Childe would not turn Jessie out without letting Grace know, and Grace prepared to depart with many thanks, hoping, in her heart, that her new coadjutor would obtain better terms still for Jessie, after she was gone. Emily's letter went by post from Ringtown, and Miss Fuller took upon herself the task of making up and directing the packet. Let it be mentioned, that Grace did not forget Mrs. Duff's fringe-frame. Any young reader, of her enthusiastic temperament, who has been placed in such a situation as hers, will appreciate her good memory on this occasion.

There had been much discussion on the necessity of Mrs. Childe writing to Constance, to annul her promise made the day before. Julia was ready with a hundred modes of conveying the intelligence. She longed to begin for her:—"I have changed my mind, and do not mean..."—"I have read your statement, and do not believe Jessie guilty..."—"I should be ashamed of turning an innocent young girl adrift..." &c. &c. But poor Mrs. Childe was shocked at every word, and all of a tremble, and Grace thought the bantering would be carried too far; she therefore gladly offered to take the news to Constance, and to say as Mrs. Childe entreated, "That it was all her own (Grace's) fault."

"Let me have some of it, pray!" cried Miss Fuller, following Grace, who was moving to the door for the fourth or fifth time.

"And my kindest love to all the family," added Mrs.

Childe; "and thank dear Mrs. Duff for her frame. I am sure I am very much obliged to you for reminding me of it; all this trouble quite upsets me, I am fit for nothing."

"Poor Mrs. Childe!" thought Grace, as she left, "how amiable she seems—how sorry I am for her:—I wonder though how any one can call Mrs. Duff, 'dear;' she may be good and clever, but not 'dear,' I think."

CHAPTER XXII.

News from all nations.

* * * * *

O th' important budget.

Couper.

How much Grace had to think of during her drive to Winterton! Perhaps the reader has forgotten, even more than Grace, the news she had heard of Mr. Guppy. Grace was vexed with herself. Memory and opportunity had never concurred, so that she could learn more about him; and now a multitude of points occurred to her, she was most anxious to have solved. Now also that she had leisure to consider, the matter struck her in a new aspect;—Ought she not to mention what she had heard? Yet, how very unpleasant to have to do such a thing! On consideration, she decided to tell Mrs. Duff, and leave her to communicate the news as she thought proper. Then she pondered over the chance of Fanny's not being informed, or only partly informed, of all particulars. It seemed her place, as a somewhat intimate friend, to see that Fanny should be told in a proper manner; but, as this could not be, her friend's mother was informed—on her princi-

ple of one trouble at a time—she did not harass herself about it. Dinner was over when Grace returned to Winterton; she was not sorry that thus the party were dispersed, and she sought Mrs. Duff in the room where she knew she would be, not yet released from curtains, fringe, and drapery. The workmen, however, had left for the evening, and North was at her tea. Mrs. Duff was highly pleased at the sight of her fringe-frame, as one of the rooms was at a standstill for half a yard of fringe, which Charlotte was to make. She enquired what had been settled about Jessie, and was pleased on hearing Mrs. Childe's decision. Grace was quite surprised at Mrs. Duff's communicativeness and confidence. That lady was very much vexed at Constance's pertinacity; she thought it not unlikely that Jessie had some knowledge of the brooch—she said there was so much dishonesty among servants, and so many such things had happened in her family; but as Jessie was her recommendation, and the theft could not be proved, she would have thought it enough for Constance to have written Jessie a letter of serious warning for the future. Grace could not let all this pass without reply: she defended the character of servants in general, from her own and her mother's experience, and of Jessie's character in particular; and though she spoke with decision, Mrs. Duff was not displeased—merely saying she was young, and her mother's household small, and scarcely any changes in it from year to year, so that they could not be well able to judge. She was pleased at all Grace had done, without being very explicit, and encouraged Grace in a sort of way to proceed.

After this, Grace imparted to Mrs. Duff the news she had heard concerning Mr. Guppy, giving her authority and names. She was surprised at the excessive amaze Mrs. Duff exhibited, for she thought every body was prepared for such a disclosure. But Mrs. Duff could not restrain

her continued exclamations of, "What an extraordinary circumstance! What will Constance say! What will Fanny say! Well, he kept his secret well! Who could ever have dreamed such a thing!" So saying, she immediately sought her daughters.

Grace met the family party first at tea, and found all full of her news of Mr. Guppy. The subject seemed to have absorbed the public attention, so that Jessie's affairs fell quite in the back-ground. This was very acceptable to Grace; she was still full of amaze and wonderment at the exceeding sensation Mr. Guppy's incognito seemed to awaken, and presently remarked upon it, alluding to the passages that had formerly occurred, which proved that the idea was not so utterly unexpected to them all.

She was answered by a general laugh.

"Why, Grace," said Mary Anne, "how stupid you must be! It is not his incognito that has surprised us all so much!—nor his marriage; but his—his—"

"His identity," said Constance, helping her sister to a word.

"Is it possible, Grace, that you do not know who the Boodles are?"

"Oh, Grace never knows any thing!" cried Mary Anne; "I can't think what she does with her senses!"

"You must remember I know nobody here," said Grace, as some mitigation of her offence.

"I know that," replied Mary Anne, "but we have constantly talked of these Boodles, and have mentioned their name at least twenty times since you have been with us!"

"Indeed I do not think you have before me," said Grace, "I think I should have remembered the name; you know I am not always in the room."

"Well, but I remember when you *were* in the room when they were talked of, at Hastings, one day," said Mary Anne.

"Don't you remember, Grace," asked Charlotte, "the family of whom Fanny said one was drowned and the other hanged?"

"You don't mean to say that Mr. Guppy is Lady Minette's nephew!" exclaimed Grace, amazed in her turn, and half frightened, in dread lest she was risking a most absurd guess."

"Yes, but indeed I do!"

"What, that he is the Zephaniah or Zedekiah!" continued Grace; "and that Fanny talked about himself to his face!"

"Oh, Fanny is altogether ridiculous!" said Constance. "That is not his real name either!—his name is Obadiah. I know a great deal of this young man, and am satisfied to think we have not been deceived in our good opinion."

The conversation now turned upon the respective merits of Osmond Guppy and Obadiah Boodle, and in the course of it, all the family stated more or less their views upon his incognito, his marriage, and his general conduct and character. He was compared with Frank Freeman, much to the disadvantage of the latter; and Grace found herself taking the side of one towards whom generally she was often opposed. She felt somewhat indignant at the comparison, just after the arrival of such news.

A letter of Grace's to Ellen may as well be inserted in this place; it was written the day following.

July 14.

My dear Ellen,

I mean this letter to be a comment on mamma's of to-day, which I have just sent off; I had no time or room there, except for facts. I wonder which piece of my news occupies you most—Mr. Guppy, or poor Jessie. I must say the last does me. How strange—was it not?—that I should go to Ringtown, and hear all that about Mr.

Guppy, or rather Mr. Boodle. I am sure people need not go to story-books for adventures and odd coincidences, for I think they happen every day. Only think of Fanny having talked of himself before the very man!—How Emily would enjoy that! I wondered very much how the Duffs would take the news. By the bye, there is one very odd thing about the Duffs—all of them, except Campbell and Charlotte—and that is, that I never can at all guess how they will take things, or what they will think: generally they think and feel exactly the contrary to what I expect. This shows I do not at all know them better yet. I thought they would be very much vexed about Mr. Guppy; but Mrs. Duff did not seem so, and Constance was quite angry that any one should blame him. She said that they all knew—indeed he had as good as told them—that his name was assumed, and that it was not fair to blame him for that; and as to his being a relation of so near a connexion as Lady Minette, that was no fault of his; that the known character of his family at Ringtown, was a recommendation to him; for that though their connexions were pious, themselves were not so, and that they and others persecuted him for his religion. She seemed more vexed when she heard of his intended marriage. I know she did not think of Fanny, but she disliked the match he was going to make, and seemed to know more than I do. You must have heard of Mrs. Grange, the cheesemonger's widow, whom every body has been calling "the Widow Grange," the last ten months. He is so thoroughly bad and heartless, that I should not think it worth while to say a word about him, except that I had seen him often so agreeable and full of good feelings, and besides that he is so very handsome. It makes me think again how long it is before one can really know a person; and certainly it gives me a lesson that I shall never forget, I think, never to judge of a person from his words alone,

for how just and true his sentiments often were, though I know I did not altogether like him. Then again, when I think of his ambiguous behaviour to Fanny, I quite forget my indifference, and wish he could be made a signal example and warning to others, who would be as bad. What a shame it is that society receives such men! I can only think that all who do, deserve to be served the same themselves some day; or if they are married, and cannot be jilted, they ought to expect that their sisters and daughters should be so served. I am always longing to set the world right on such matters, and this, my first personal experience, has not abated my yearning. Poor Fanny! I know she has been imprudent! I am very sorry for her, however, though I cannot guess what she will say. Sometimes I think she will be quite overwhelmed, and the next minute that she will not care for Obadiah Boodle, who she thought had been hung.

I have been a good deal surprised at Constance's conduct in Jessie's case. I think North must have great influence, and urge her on, but yet this surprises me as much. North is evidently a woman of very undisciplined temper, and she seems to make no secret of her dislike to Jessie and Hanson; at least she speaks quite bitterly against them both, though I believe she really wishes to do them good. I had quite a different idea of her, after I heard her talk of them, and reply last night to the paper I wrote out for Jessie. Was not Martha—the nurse's—evidence satisfactory? How beautifully truth always fits in, even in such small matters as these. I am longing to be a barrister, though I don't think I could ever take the wrong side. But I was going to speak of Constance, because I know you and Emily will be so angry with her, and I cannot blame her so much to her face, as when I am away from her, she speaks so reasonably, and does all with such calmness and deliberation. I fancy you will be even more an-

gry with Mrs. Childe, and will call her conduct cowardly. I cannot say it is not so ; but I am in the midst of it all, and see her and her great amiability ; and I never can be as indignant with people when I see them and hear them, as when I hear or read of their doings. Actions—such as these, I mean—do not seem so bad close by, and all this makes me more and more wonder at people being afraid of differing from others. Indeed, altogether that is a feeling I cannot at all comprehend ; it makes me laugh more than any thing else, it seems to me “so droll,” as the Wintons always say, though the truth is, I know, that I have not amiability for entering into such fear of others. There is nothing so painful to me as to see such people as the Childes, and to hear them talk ; and if you had been present to witness what passed, I should not have said a single word about them. How is it, Ellen, that religious people are so afraid of doing what they think right ? I always think if people are but religious, they cannot help being just in act and true in word, as well as every thing else that is right.

This is a most amusing, exciting house to be in ; there is always something going on, and we have discussions without end. Constance is so reasonable and calm, that though we do not agree in Jessie’s matter, it makes no difference with her ; and I think Mary Anne begins to understand me better. I think she is pleased at my helping her in her painting ; we see a good deal of each other over this work. I wish people would not be prejudiced ; I fancy she has been so towards me, yet I am sure I am a very harmless creature, that would not do a mischief. The other day I looked through several portfolios of the Duffs, containing their drawings since they first began ; I was quite surprised at the multitude of their pieces, and their exceeding patience and perseverance. I cannot think why Constance should give up drawing, and why Mary Anne

does not succeed better now ; I laugh at them, and tell them that if I could draw and colour as well as they can, I should do a great deal better. It seems so strange to me, that with such dexterity of hand and eye, they cannot command more ease and originality of style. Constance's pencil landscapes are quite exquisite, and so are some of her copies from Harding's fine style. And there are some large groups of flowers of Mary Anne's, very showy and striking at a little distance : the fault is, that she takes too much pains on the whole, and yet scarcely one of her pieces is actually finished in all parts ; either the back or foreground, or the vase, or some of the flowers, being left undone. I want her to set about finishing them, but she says she has not patience, and cannot do any thing without the copies. Neither she nor Constance can draw a line without a copy, and I think this is the reason they are inclined to give up drawing altogether. Drawing with copies seems of no use to grown-up people ; though certainly, as Constance says, it is all the same for bazaar work, and she never now takes up a pencil but for that. I have written close, that I should not cross ; but you see I do not quite escape, for here is the very last line, and I must just add, that Mary Anne was very angry at first about Mr. Guppy's incognito, till Constance explained it. She did not seem to think half as much about his being engaged ; she said she should have guessed by his manner that he was going to be married, and that she said so to Fanny ; so this is all very well, though I cannot say I should have guessed the same. After all, I have not said a word more about Newton Grey, as I had intended. I told mamma all the facts, but there have been already some curious discussions over the whole affair. I cannot help thinking that Campbell and Frank Freeman know a great deal more about it than Mrs. Newton Grey herself ; and I suppose this is not unlikely, as they are of the same college. Besides, I just now remem-

ber a remark Campbell made to me one day at Hastings, that makes this more likely. Now, at last, good bye.

Ever affectionately yours,

GRACE LESLIE.

Thursday Evening.

There are two allusions in this letter necessary to be explained. The first is, concerning Martha, the nursery-maid. Grace had strongly urged Jessie's request that Martha might be examined before Jessie's own evidence was seen ; indeed Grace kept Jessie's papers in her own hands until this wish was complied with. Accordingly, on the morning of this day, Martha was summoned into the presence of the assembled family, North all the time protesting that Martha's evidence was good for nothing, since those two girls always hung together like bees, and what one said, the other was sure to hold to. Constance moderated North's impetuosity, showing her it was a more than usually serious matter, and that Martha must be as bad as Jessie herself, if now she said any thing but the truth. She then turned to Martha, and put it to her conscience, giving a lecture upon truth and falsehood, which was every word of it good and true. After this, Martha gave her account of all the points alluded to in Constance's statement, and afterwards underwent a strict examination. This need not be detailed, as every word coincided with the facts before stated. Grace could not however but observe that the tone of the evidence made Jessie and Hanson much more of sufferers from North's manners and temper than the former evidence. Then, on the other hand, it was an acknowledged fact, that North was no favourite with Martha. The only new fact that transpired, was that on the night first alluded to. Martha's deposition as to this point was as follows :—

“ We had talked so much of thieves this night, that I

got quite frightened, and after I had been in bed a little time, I jumped up, locked the door, and put the key under my pillow. When I woke in the morning, I saw North nearly dressed. I remembered what I had done with the key, and was ashamed of my fears when it came to be daylight. So I got up and managed, unknown to North, to slip the key in and turn the lock, while North was standing at the door, looking round and scolding Jessie, who was at that moment waking. It was impossible that Jessie or any body else could have got at the key without waking me; I had thrust it to the very end of the bolster, under my head. All were asleep when I locked the door, but North seemed to be a little roused. I never mentioned this circumstance to any but Hanson."

CHAPTER XXIII.

.....But all
Was from his parents happily concealed,
Who saw enough for blame and pitying love.

Wordsworth.

GRACE'S other allusion, concerning Newton Grey, requires some detail, and a little patience, in order to master the whole matter. Mrs. Newton Grey was an old friend of the Duff family, and an acquaintance of the rest of the party. She was a widow, and Newton was her only child. This morning, this lady had been making her first call on the Duffs after their return from Hastings, and Mary Anne and Constance followed her out of the room, as she

was leaving. Just after this Campbell entered, leaving Frank Freeman, who had come down unexpectedly to spend the morning with him, outside the door.

"Oh, ma'am," said Campbell, to his mother, in a low tone, "I suppose there is no objection to my asking Freeman to dine with us to-day?"

"Why to-day, Campbell?" returned his mother; "you know I never like to have strangers to dine with us, the day before a party.—Cannot you ask him for to-morrow?"

"He will be at home to-morrow," replied Campbell, "and really it is a matter of charity to ask him to day, for he knows nobody in London, and hates chop-houses. If you will not give him a dinner, I know he will go without. He is not at all particular—our dinner will do very well for him."

Grace all this time was wondering over this scene. They had greeted and spoken to Frank Freeman for one minute, when he first came; but she wondered how it was that Mrs. Duff could suffer him to stand so long outside the door, and almost refuse to give him a dinner. His meek and quiet looks perhaps strengthened her surprise; and she longed to go and speak to him, or wished she could give him her place at dinner. However, almost before she had finished these reflections, and quite before Mrs. Duff had given her son a final answer, Mary Anne and Constance quickly brushed by Frank Freeman, who suddenly retreated, to make way for them, and entered the room, Mary Anne exclaiming, "Why, Campbell, how is it that you have never told us? surely, you know all this about Newton Grey!"

"All what?" asked Campbell, drily.

"Why, that he has been expelled from Oxford! why did you not tell us?"

"I did not think it would be such welcome news," replied Campbell.

"Welcome!" exclaimed Mary Anne; "that I am sure it is not; I am sure I do pity poor dear Mrs. Newton Grey from my heart—poor thing, she is so miserable!"

"How is it all, Constance?" asked Mrs. Duff, turning to her other daughter, who had an open letter in her hand. "How have you heard this? Did Mrs. Newton Grey tell you?"

"Oh, no, poor thing!" said Constance, "she was too much overcome; I thought something was the matter, all the time she was here—she was so low! and as she took leave of me, she squeezed my hand, left this letter in it, and then stepped quickly into the carriage."

"Oh, poor thing!" said Mary Anne, "she must put down her carriage, turn off some of her servants, and live any how, ever so long!"

"Has he got into debt, then?" asked Mrs. Duff.

"Oh, yes, to be sure!" replied Mary Anne. "How could you not tell us all this, Campbell? You are so strange, I never can understand you!"

"But, Constance," continued her mother, "pray tell us what was the cause of all this at Oxford."

"You must read dear Mrs. Newton Grey's letter, mamma," said Constance; "I think what she says seems very likely. I know Newton can be troublesome, and she does not deny his faults; but I do think he seems to have been hardly used. You see the tutors at his college are not pious, and of course they have a dislike to all pious characters. Now it is well known that Newton's mother is a very pious woman, and that he is certainly inclined to be the same, and I do think they have marked him out as a victim; for Mrs. Newton Grey says there were three others quite as bad, and one of them has been merely rusticated for one term, while the others have not been punished at all."

"You must recollect, my dear," said Mrs. Duff, "that

Newton was a sad trouble to Mr. Taylor. I remember Mr. Taylor said one day, that he could hardly manage Newton at all, and that he would not have him under his roof for any sum his mother could offer him."

"Well," cried Mary Anne, "I am sure Mr. Taylor need not talk, for no one can be worse than his own sons, Why cannot he manage them before he complains of others?"

"Mary Anne," cried Constance, "that is a very thoughtless speech! What parents can answer for their children?"

"I know very well," replied Mary Anne, "that the children of pious parents are a great deal worse than others; I mean worse outwardly—they seem worse. I think that piety in the parents, and disobedience in the children, always go together; but I do not like to hear Mr. Taylor talk in that way about Newton, when his own sons are as bad."

"As to your theory of piety and disobedience, Mary Anne," observed Constance, "it seems paradoxical, but I think there is much to be said in its favour."

"My dear children," interrupted Mrs. Duff, "there's an exception to it, at any rate. I do not complain of disobedience among you."

"Oh, no, mamma," cried Mary Anne, hastily; "but then you know you and papa are not so pious as Mrs. Newton Grey and Mr. Taylor!"

"Your theory, Mary Anne, as I was going to observe," continued Constance, gravely, "is very far borne out by scripture. We see the children of the highest saints disobedient and wicked, as in the case of Eli, Samuel, and others."

"But," remarked Grace, "how severely the parents were rebuked and punished, as if they were themselves greatly to blame: and Abraham seems, on the other hand,

to have been exalted, because, it is said, he would take care to command his children, and his household after him."

"Yes; but Abraham is only one instance, after all," said Mary Anne, quickly; "there are many more my way."

"I am sure I would not send a son of mine to Oxford, with the experience I have had!" said Constance, as she was looking again over Mrs. Newton Grey's letter; "it is very evident they sacrifice pious families and individuals. If I were a tutor, I should, on the contrary, rather favour the sons of decided christians, even if they were bad, because there is more hope of them than of others."

"After all," observed Mary Anne, "I don't see the great good a university education does people. Latin and Greek are of no use after people leave college; and I don't see the use of spending so much precious time upon them. If the university had a decidedly spiritual character, it would be different."

"Well, certainly, I have a growing feeling on that side of the question," said Constance.

Mary Anne was pleased with her sister's agreement, and continued, "Why you know people preach just as well without going to a university. And, besides," added she, as a new bright thought struck her, "women never go to a university, and I am sure they do well enough. Then consider, how well many people do in the end. Osmond Guppy (he still kept his old name among them) Osmond Guppy was never at any university, yet how well he has turned out at last; and I am sure no one can say he is not well educated, and highly cultivated!"

Here, Campbell, who had been standing all this time, silently reading a book, seemed to give up, in despair, all chance of obtaining a reply about Frank Freeman's dinner, as his mother had taken the letter from her daughter's hand, and was now intently perusing it; he retreated,

therefore, into the hall, where his friend was still waiting for him. The late discussion was quite public, and loud enough for Frank Freeman to hear ; indeed, it seemed impossible that he should not ; but whether a smile, which even Grace could perceive in the distance, constantly hovering about his lip, had to do with any thoughts roused by the remarks that flew rapidly about, or whether he was merely amused by a kitten, which was playing with a worsted ball and knitting of Constance's, Grace could not decide.

" Ah," cried Constance, as the two friends passed the window for their walk, looking very merry, " now they are laughing at a companion in disgrace ;—I am ashamed of Campbell."

" I am sure Frank Freeman does him no good," observed Mary Anne ; " I know Campbell avoided Mrs. Newton Grey to-day, for he was waiting half an hour till she should go, before he came into the room. I see very plainly he means to cut all our pious friends."

" No, my dear," said Mrs. Duff, " Campbell was right in this case ; Mrs. Newton Grey, in her letter, expresses great gratitude to him, for not spreading abroad any reports. She says, she thought we were sure to know it, all through him ; and was much relieved that the story should not come to us, exaggerated by the gossip of companions."

" Any body can understand why Campbell did not come in while Mrs. Newton Grey was here," observed Charlotte, quietly ; while Grace had long before thought such a remark quite unnecessary.

CHAPTER XXIV.

.....Thus was beauty sent from heaven,
The lovely mistress of truth and good,
In this dark world—for truth and good are one,
And beauty dwells in them, and they in her
With like participation. Wherefore then,
Oh, sons of Earth ! would ye dissolve the tie ?

Akenside.

SOME account perhaps should be given, of Grace's constant visits to the painting room. For this purpose it is necessary to go back a few days, and relate the history of the rise and progress of her engagement.

It may be remembered that Mary Anne had in hand portraits of her two sisters, the twins. Emily and George had amused themselves abundantly with this their cousin's first attempt at any thing of the kind, and while at Hastings had often described it to Grace. Emily had publicly charged Grace one day to prepare for a severe trial of her risible muscles, when she first stood before the far-famed picture, and to be sure to remember George's words of warning as she entered the room. This warning had been subsequently often reverted to. Mary Anne was of that sort of disposition, that whatever she saw done, she persuaded herself to believe she could do it, if she chose to take the trouble ; and now and then she did choose to take the trouble. She had the perseverance of vanity, a faculty which generally leads to a considerable degree of attainment, though never of the very highest quality. Mary Anne's perseverance, however, was not proof against the temptation of bye-roads, which held out any fair prospect of a short cut to the goal she was making for ; namely, the approbation of some portion of mankind. She knew

her present attempt was by no means of the most artist-like description, but she thought better of it than any who had seen it, and did not care for her cousins' raillery upon it, when she was no longer in their presence. Also she had a very comfortable faculty of turning a blind eye to deficiencies, so also of magnifying or creating excellencies, in all that concerned her own productions ; and this faculty was called into double exercise during absence from the object of her labours. She generally had some one thing in hand of this kind, which for the time claimed her energies and affections. This painting had been that one for many weeks past, and she had been anxiously desiring to present it for Grace's inspection, in spite of the introduction it had received at the hands of her cousins. She could not however but be conscious of a shade of strong disappointment which crept over her heart, at her first view of this dear creation of her art, on her return from Hastings. In a mind predisposed to admiration, as Mary Anne's was, this ought to have been a sign sufficient to awake serious suspicions as to the soundness of her opinion, on the worth of her performance ; but instead of following up her dawning doubts and fears, she turned her mind into a different train, and exclaimed to Charlotte, who came with her to the painting room, " I thought it was more finished."

In this way she banished her disappointment, and sought Grace for the desired introduction. Grace had been highly amused by Emily's account of this famous portrait, and the more so as she did not quite believe it, but considered it a clever piece of *persiflage*, such as young self-taught artists must naturally expect. Those who know Mary Anne Duff only in a book, cannot at all estimate the extreme inferiority of this specimen of her taste and powers, nor could they very well enter into Grace's feelings on being placed before the easel. She had entered the room gaily, laughing over Emily's charges to her, and without any doubt of the

playful exaggeration evident in the sallies of her lively friend ; but her gaiety somewhat abated, as soon as the picture in its unfinished deformity met her eye.

It had been begun as a portrait of Constance, nearly as large as life, intending merely to give the bust ; as the artist proceeded, she thought it a great pity not to add Fanny, since the canvass was not cut, and there was plenty of room. Fanny's head and shoulders were accordingly inserted. She was not at home to sit for her likeness, but that was considered no obstacle, since the two sisters were so alike, that as Mary Anne said, no stranger could tell them apart, and any finishing touches could be added afterwards. The next suggestion was, to make full length figures of the pair, and add some appropriate scenery. Now it happened that that there was abundant space in the width of the canvass, but not in the height, and it struck every one, that the head would present a somewhat preposterous appearance with the body below, especially taking into account the height of the originals. But the artist, fertile in resources, suggested an easy expedient, namely, that of placing her subjects on their knees. True, there was but an inadequate space behind the figures for the due elongation of limb, which the position she proposed required ; but a little management could do great things, and besides, nobody would ever think of measuring the proportions. The more she considered the idea, the more she was satisfied with it, for, as she observed, her sister's height made a full length portrait doubtful, and it would be a far more compact picture, if thus reduced in its dimensions. The next perplexity was the arms. Every body knows what trouble one has to dispose of such intractable limbs as hands and arms in a picture, and Mary Anne, though a self-taught genius, did not seem to rise superior to this difficulty. At length she thought of a sisterly embrace. By this means two of the refractory limbs were amicably disposed of, and

as for Fanny's left arm it was not necessary to be seen at all, and Constance's right might hang down by her side.

The next thing to be considered was the scene around. A room was out of the question, for Mary Anne knew nothing of perspective, and said she should never have patience for the small details of an interior, which "any body could do." An out-door scene therefore was decided upon, and something of a wood was the result, since trees in oils Mary Anne considered required but "a dab and patch of green," here and there, as she had found on examining those of the first masters. Some one then suggested that the attire of the ladies was not quite in keeping with the scene around, and to remedy this, it was proposed to hang a bonnet on the unemployed arm. But here came a new difficulty, the arm was Constance's, and Constance protested that she would have none but her own bonnet. If however Mary Anne could have faithfully represented that, (which Constance doubted,) Fanny, who chanced to pay a visit of a few hours at this crisis, declared that she would not sit for the finishing touches; and others too were against the bonnet, as being "affected." Nothing therefore was done to make the scene and the dresses accord. Mary Anne said, people, who had any imagination, could fancy that the sisters had run away from "stupid people," in order to enjoy each other's society in a wood.

The completion of the design was owing to Constance, who suddenly declared one morning that she never would be seen looking on in that stupid way with nothing to do, and that she would be surrounded with some of her customary employments. Mary Anne embraced this idea as a most happy one, not only on Constance's account, but on Fanny's. She could thus make the picture a record of the learning and accomplishment of the family. As such it would possess an intrinsic value, and be a proud memorial to their hearts, as well as an ornament to the house. Mr.

and Mrs. Duff were both delighted with the new idea, and Mary Anne began profusely to scatter around symbols, as well as materials appropriate to the acquirements of her two sisters. Near Fanny was a poetic lyre, and a small picture of mount Helicon, with Pegasus on its summit. Beneath the hitherto unoccupied arm of Constance was placed a large portfolio, which fulfilled a double purpose. It saved the labour of drapery, and announced to the spectator, by an inscription on its side, Constance's peculiar studies ; the words were " Drawings, Herbarium, Notices on unfulfilled Prophecy." The last was inserted by Constance's especial request, since she considered it would modify any appearance of undue conformity to worldly tastes, and show the spectator, that though there might seem some lightness of fancy, serious thought was by no means in the back ground ; she considered that it might even be the means of doing good to some casual visitors, or acquaintances.

Imagine then the group, and add to it, that the execution of the sketch, for it had in parts scarcely proceeded beyond the outline, was of the same character with the design, and some faint idea may be gained of the picture upon which Grace was called to gaze and approve. Poor Grace, between an accurate eye, a decided taste, a most amiable heart, a true tongue, and a keen sense of the absurd,—what could she do ! She managed as well as she could, and was assisted by the time the conversation took. Fanny began by protesting against her own likeness ; but added, it did not signify, as none of her acquaintances would see it ; and if they did, they would never know for whom it was meant. After this the foregoing history of the portrait was duly unfolded to Grace, and in the course of the narrative her various feelings upon it escaped her naturally and without effort. But Mary Anne was not satisfied with hearing Grace's opinion expressed in general terms,

or with perceiving it in her mode and manner, and she pressed Grace to say in so many words, what she thought of her design and performance. Almost every mind would under such circumstances be instinctively urged to make a similar request, which is a very proper one, when a sincere criticism can be received with philosophy, and with a sincere intention of profiting by the opinion expressed. Mary Anne however was not accustomed to examine the motives of her words and actions very deeply, and it was more from the love of talk, and the hope of being persuaded to believe what she knew neither herself nor Grace believed really, namely, that there was considerable merit and talent in her picture, that she urged the question. Grace, on the contrary, was too frank and truthful to treat Mary Anne's appeal as the latter desired. "What do I think of it?" cried she, laughing, "why, I think a great many things of it. Some I have told you, and I will tell you more by and by, if you wish it."

"Oh, nonsense!" cried Fanny, "Mary Anne does not care for your opinion, Grace; she only wants you to praise. Mary Anne never attends to advice."

"Now, I cannot think that fair, Fanny," repeated Grace, "and my opinion is, that Mary Anne attends too much to advice rather than too little. Think over the composition of this picture, and you will see that Mary Anne has followed every body's advice, and not allowed her own taste to guide her sufficiently."

"Mary Anne's taste!" exclaimed Fanny.

"Taste, in my opinion," observed Constance, "has very little to do with such things, if we look upon them in a Christian light. The object of all a Christian does, should be to improve a subject, and if he can do this by any means, it matters very little whether the lines by which he accomplishes it are gracefully drawn, or the shades finely tinted. If those letters of Mary Anne's," added

she, pointing to the inscription on the portfolio, "are ill-shaped, or the basket of tracts in bad perspective, what does it signify, supposing by their means a soul is drawn from the world, and converted to holiness?"

"But then you should take into account, Constance," remarked Grace, "that your principle would lead to the disregard of all rules of taste and order, and that by such disregard, where one person is benefitted, a hundred or a thousand may learn to connect ugliness and deformity, instead of beauty and order, with religion; and so as much injury as good may be done in the end to the cause of truth."

"Grace is too deep a philosopher for me," cried Mary Anne; "I should never know what was right if I went by her notions."

At the same time Constance replied, "Well, and if such people were disgusted, it is what I would rather desire. We must give up our natural tastes when we enter upon a religious course; the carnal mind is enmity against God. Besides which, I consider that religion *is* deformity, rather than beauty, if we judge with an eye of art and taste."

"Oh, I cannot think that, Constance!" said Grace; "what do you say to the beauties of the natural world?"

"I say that they were created for man in his state of innocence, and are only fit for him in that state."

"And if so," returned Grace, "they are left to show him now what true religion was, and therefore is, and to draw his whole heart back to the state which he has lost."

"That would be very true, if he was not to be restored now by different means."

"But still the profuse and lavish beauty in the outward world," continued Grace, "must represent to us what sort of character truth bears, and we must see that that character is *beautiful*."

"I see what you mean, Grace," said Constance, "but I

must say that your expressions are obscure, and that your idea is mystical and cloudy, as well as most mistaken, and I fear dangerous; Christians must learn simplicity, and become as little children, instead of entangling themselves with the tastes and pursuits of the world."

"I am sure, Constance," cried Fanny, "I should be much more entangled if I strove to admire and be satisfied with your tastes and principles, than with any that Grace has put forth. I quite understand Grace, and like her theory, and shall follow it up. I never could understand why you should make religion as disagreeable as you possibly can to every body."

"Not *every* body," said Constance, with command of temper.

"Well, to every body of *taste*," returned the sister.

"That is what I expect and wish," added the other.

At this point Fanny was summoned, as all were waiting for her, and the carriage was at the door, to carry her to Lady Minette. A half leave-taking passed. Grace had had but little time to speak a few words to Fanny, and the latter with expressive looks deplored the loss of a parting *tête-à-tête*, but both expected her return in the evening, and thus were consoled.

CHAPTER XXV.

Genius is of no country.

Churchill.

GRACE now found herself with Mary Anne alone in the painting room, and was ready, with a Quixotic honesty, to give the criticism for which Mary Anne called upon her. Mary Anne, according to her usual habit, at first scarcely

paid any attention, but presently was a little quickened by the tone and feeling evident in Grace's remarks. "Why could you not, Mary Anne," said she, "foreshorten—add a little more drapery, make the portfolio smaller, and place it in perspective?"—Many such suggestions she made, as she pointed out her ideas.

"Well, take a brush and show me what you mean," replied Mary Anne.

"I never took a brush in my hand," cried Grace, amused at the idea.

"No more did I, till I began this painting," returned the other, "and I thought of oil painting just as you do; but really it is not at all hard, when once you begin. Pencil and water colours are so dull after oils, that I cannot bear to see them, and that was the reason I thought so little of your sketches. If once you begin oils, I am sure you will never take up a pencil again; that has been the case with me."

Thus Mary Anne encouraged her companion, by her own example and experience.

Grace was perhaps incited by the result, for she took the brush, saying, "You can paint over all I do, can you not?" and proceeded to put in some touches. A very few gave something of the effect she desired.

Mary Anne was pleased, and encouraged her to go on with other parts; and thus was begun a coalition between the young ladies, which was carried on for the week with considerable spirit. Grace undertook to help Mary Anne in the subordinate parts, and for that purpose arranged to be up early every morning, to secure a certain time for work; but as it turned out, Grace's time was much devoted to this employment, as she found Mary Anne liked her assistance.

The two allies met accordingly in the so called painting room every morning before breakfast, and they continued

vergent to which I ask my friends elsewhere dis-
missed. Mary Anne was not like Catherine, an early
"tea-drinker." She was not so sure that the in-
tegration of the family required; as on occasions she
was a source of trouble, and she was weak and naturally
unambitious. She could not be sure of
the success of any plan that she had, and it would
be very improper to give advice to anyone a
little less than a saint. Indeed, she was only to be
satisfied, as the necessity for the time herself
showed. When Mary Anne was in her
childhood, her mother's conversation would be of ser-
vice to her. But now, as she was getting
to be a young woman, she was not so much an object
of the parent's eye. The objects and interests of both par-
ties, as well as the conversation, had been given;
and we will meet with her very in the morning, and
which was on Tuesday, the 1st of April.

"A few moments ago we were in the parlour
reading, and the door opened. Grace, as she wanted to
move Mary Anne's chair and when she conceived was a
better light. "I hardly know nothing is all about it."

"Oh, Grace," she more timid Mary Anne, "it is
not enough to those who have any sense, and it is to use
giving all the teaching in the world to those who have not.
You know I tell you I never earned."

"But then we may be beginning in the wrong end, and
making all sorts of moral numbers, for what we know,"
continued Grace: "I wonder you do not take regular les-
sons."

"Our drawing master does not teach in his; indeed
none do," replied Mary Anne. "Besides, I had rather
excel without learning. I believe that every thing is to be
done by oneself, if one pleases."

"That is to be done by teaching alone, without one's

own exertions; I know that well," returned Grace; "but still instruction in any art must be most desirable, if not absolutely necessary. For instance—I know nothing about it—but I should have thought you ought to make a sketch of some kind, or have some outline to guide you in your design, before you began such a great picture as this. It seems quite impossible to manage this nicely, or change the attitudes, as I suggested, on the canvass, now it has gone on so far."

"Oh, I should never have patience for a copy!" exclaimed Mary Anne, "it would be in fact making two pictures. Besides I feel any copy would cramp my genius; I think we have all gone on with copies too long."

"Well, I cannot help thinking," returned Grace, "that a master—a good artist—would tell one all such things, and put one in the right way at once. But really," added she, after she had been considering and pointing out the difficulty of managing the group, "if I were you, I would make this the copy, and begin afresh on a new piece of canvass."

"Oh, then I am sure I should never do it at all," said Mary Anne; "such plans may do for people who have the drudgery of patience to help them, but it would spoil my style entirely. Besides I should waste the canvass and the paint."

"That is not much," said Grace, "I am sure you need not think of that, when your mamma has fitted you out so handsomely in materials. I think I never saw a more complete outfit; I wonder it does not dishearten you as a beginner."

"It cost mamma altogether above £30.," said Mary Anne; "she likes us to have all we can possibly want, when we undertake any thing, and she is very proud of my talents."

"I do wonder more and more that you do not take les-

sons," said Grace again ; " I am sure if I had been you, I would have asked for a few lessons, instead of having my room new furnished again so handsomely this year."

" I say again I do not wish it, Grace," said Mary Anne ; " but if I did, I don't know if mamma would like me to have lessons ; she says we are too old for masters now."

" Oh ! does she ?" said Grace.

Grace soon found that she handled her new implement, the brush, as little awkwardly as Mary Anne, and Mary Anne found that it was very pleasant to paint by deputy. Grace got bolder and bolder every stroke, and went on, encouraged by her instructress's assurances that all could be painted over again. After about an hour, Constance called her sister away, but not before the latter had entreated Grace to continue according to the plan which they had agreed upon, and of which Grace was making a sketch.

Grace proceeded in her work alone, for Mary Anne did not return till just before the summons to family prayers.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Man, know thyself: all wisdom centres here.

Young.

THE next morning, a different style of conversation ensued. " How pleasant it is," observed Grace, soon after they were seated to their employment, " how pleasant it is to be up before the rest of the world ; one seems to be working for all who are asleep, and one seems to be able to make so much more use of that time than any other."

"You always have such strange thoughts, Grace Leslie," replied Mary Anne; "time is time, and I don't see why it can be longer or better at one season of the day than another; all must depend on the use we make of that precious talent—time; besides, I think there is something selfish in the feeling you speak of."

"It is not that I do not like others to be up too," replied Grace, "but I enjoy the quiet of an empty house, and the *idea* it gives of oneself being the only one busy."

"Then you like to deceive yourself," said Mary Anne, "which is a very dangerous thing; and I think your feeling is altogether wrong. It is selfish, and selfishness springs from pride: these two things—pride and selfishness—are the root of all evil. The human heart too is full of deceit. I always think that line in Young's 'Night Thoughts' very expressive;—

'That hideous thing, a naked human heart.'"

Finding Grace did not presently reply, she continued, "Are you not used to search as narrowly as this into your motives? I know it is a hard task to the carnal mind, but renewed natures rejoice in the work of self-examination; they rejoice whether they are abased or exalted, because they know where to cast all their burdens. Do you keep a diary?"

Grace's mind had been bewildered by the rapidity of her companion's changes of thought. She often felt Constance's mode abrupt and startling, yet she was never unable to follow *her*, and reply; but Mary Anne had not her sister's seriousness, either in thought or in manner. Though Grace felt this, she always considered that any person who talked on serious topics, was serious and religious, and meant to do good; she, therefore, was pleased at Mary Anne's talking on such subjects, though she felt grieved and pained

that she could not respond in the same strain. To Mary Anne's last enquiry, she answered, "I do not think I keep the sort of diary you mean."

"I mean a journal of your experiences," said Mary Anne. "If you are a Christian, you must have experiences. Why do you not keep a diary?"

"I am afraid to do so," said Grace.

"Ah, there it is!" cried Mary Anne; "the half-hearted are afraid, they are afraid to see their own weakness and deformity."

"That is not exactly what I mean," said Grace; "I am afraid of saying what is not true; besides, I really do not know what I could say."

"The humble Christian can never be at a loss there," said Mary Anne; "I have kept a journal from my earliest youth, and know the value of it. You cannot deny that self-examination is a Christian exercise, and how can you examine yourself if you do not keep a journal? My belief is, that no person can be a Christian who does not keep a journal."

"That cannot be," observed Grace, "because how many there are, even now, who cannot write; and of the first Christians, very few, for ages, could write, or even read."

"But those were the dark ages," replied Mary Anne; "besides, their inferiority is no excuse to us, who live in more enlightened times."

"That is very true," said Grace, "we can read and write, and we ought to make the best use of the talent."

"Then, if you think so, why do you not keep a journal?"

"I do not think I could," repeated Grace; "I have nothing to say."

"Why it seems the easiest thing in the world to me," said Mary Anne; "you know you must be in some sort of

frame, every minute ; and you must have passed a day profitably or unprofitably, or heard conversations, or sermons, or prayers, edifying or unedifying. Nothing is easier than to put these down, and record a notice, thankful or humble, as may be. Then there are all the opportunities of good that occur, and which should be mentioned."

"But I am so different from all of you," said Grace ; "I never do good to any one—I cannot."

"Of course, the same is not expected from babes as from established Christians," replied Mary Anne, "but you might try ; all must try, and not hide their talent, however small, in a napkin. Has not Constance ever talked to you about keeping a journal?"

Grace replied, she had not.

Mary Anne expressed her surprise ; and the discussion continued in much the same strain, till the bell summoned the young artists down stairs.

CHAPTER XXVII.

"Perdie," said Britomart, "the choice is hard."

Spenser.

NOTWITHSTANDING the difference of opinion in the family on every thing connected with the lost brooch, it was constantly made a subject of general conversation. There might be a slight degree of unconscious reserve upon it observed in the presence of Mrs. Duff, who had more than once shown uneasiness at its discussion, but the young

people did not enter into their mother's scruples. Indeed, Mary Anne and Constance, to Grace's surprise, did not hesitate to relate the story according to their own view of it, and to talk over it, to all their acquaintances and visitors. Charlotte, when present, added a word on her side of the question, which, being unusual with her, brought down a rebuke from her elder sisters, and a catalogue of the proofs and charges against the unfortunate Jessie.

Grace was frequently a witness of these conversations, and though, during the alleged evidence against Jessie, she felt as if needles and pins were being thrust into her, she took no part whatever. She had felt herself in an uncomfortable position in the family from the first, and since she found her remarks could not be acceptable to some of the individuals, it seemed best to her to talk of it as little as possible, especially as Charlotte was not at all backward in making remarks and corrections. But as Grace sat and heard, she became more and more resolved to go through with her undertaking, and support Jessie to the utmost; she felt that if she were possessed of the treasures of Cræsus, or the mines of Golconda, she would spend the last mite, the last grain, in clearing the character of one she believed to be most cruelly and unjustly suspected. But Grace had nothing of wealth to bestow—except indeed that she had spent, as it happened, her last half-sovereign in her Wednesday expedition. She had nothing to give in the good cause but an energy of thought and action, which in some characters and in some causes fills the place of wealth and all other worldly goods, making them appear as mere dust in the balance. How much Jessie Baines would have to answer for, if such confidence and enthusiasm were bestowed upon an unworthy object! Grace was not accustomed to expose her feelings, when they were merely personal. The Miss Duffs did not follow this rule, and being constantly engrossed by conversation, did not]

perhaps reflect as much upon what was likely to give pain to Grace, as she had done, on her side, towards them ; they therefore frequently lacerated poor Grace's feelings by the mode in which every moment they talked of Jessie and her assumed guilt. Grace made all allowance for their entire belief in this guilt, but it seemed to her unnecessary, if not unjust, to prejudge the case, and to talk over the matter as they did, to every person that came into the house. This apparent bluntness of judgment or feeling on the part of the two sisters might however be owing to some other cause than thoughtlessness ; it might perhaps arise from their habit of regarding any feelings or opinions that did not approve themselves to their own minds, as fancies or weaknesses, requiring to be probed, rather than healed ; and therefore they might, even on principle, abstain from any attempt at softening ideas or expressions likely to occasion their guest, as well as their sister Charlotte, great uneasiness. Whatever was the cause however, during these days the two eldest Miss Duffs lost no opportunity of relating and commenting on the affair of the lost brooch. For instance, after Jessie's reply had been read, with Martha's testimony of the locked door and hidden key, Constance could not but be struck, and she made some sort of concession as to Jessie's guilt, concerning the burglary—as it came to be called. She said she was not ashamed of being mistaken and of confessing it, that all along she had considered the theft of the brooch Jessie's *main* crime, and she was quite satisfied to confine her charge to that. Mary Anne was by no means of this opinion. She suggested that Jessie was very artful, and had all the time been awake, and was aware of Martha's hiding the key ; that she had risen and gone down stairs, as North declared ; and that finally, she was sly enough now to plan an appeal to Martha's evidence, as a means of clearing herself from the charge. When unable to main-

tain this view of the case—through Charlotte's, and even Constance's representations—Mary Anne suggested that Martha was in some sort in league with Jessie, not in the burglary, but in the scheme of shielding Jessie from the accusation. This and many other points in the case, little affairs that happened at Hastings, small incidents concerning Jessie, during their visit there, which Grace had scarcely noticed, or had quite forgotten—looks she had never seen, and words she had never heard—were brought up and canvassed before strangers and acquaintances with a warmth of expression and accuracy of detail, which perfectly astounded her.

In this way the Miss Duffs obtained from all sides the sympathy of their friends. Grace learned also in these conversations many little facts and opinions, she had not before been aware of. Constance had frequently spoken of her "kind and considerate intentions and plans" towards Jessie, in the event of the latter conforming to her conditions. Grace had not at all understood what the said kind intentions were; but in the course of these discussions, Constance allowed them to become more apparent, and her schemes were neither more nor less than to admit Jessie as the first inmate into her prospective penitentiary.

Constance, in her second letter to Jessie, had made this proposal, and in her third had more fully developed her scheme. Grace had heard of these letters, but knew nothing of their contents, and of Jessie's replies, except simply the fact as stated by Mary Anne, that Jessie proved herself more ungrateful and hardened every day, by refusing in the most insolent manner all her sister's kind overtures.

Constance's letters should be given at length, but that it is likely some minds might feel the tone of them uncomfortable. Some may think, with Mrs. Duff, that there is a possibility of Jessie not being as guilty as Constance imagines, and others even with Grace, that there is a moral

certainly of her entire innocence ; and if so, any serious addresses to her on any opposite supposition, might appear positively painful. Indeed Constance's arguments, pleas, and representations were of the most startling and solemn nature, and such as none would be justified in producing, who did not as fully and entirely believe in Jessie's guilt as Constance herself did. For this reason they are left to the imagination of the reader.

Constance's proposal however, abstracted from serious exhortations and appeals, was as follows :—If Jessie would acknowledge her guilt, as to the two crimes in question, Constance would not only be content to forbear any further prosecution, but would receive the penitent into the intended penitentiary, the very first moment it was opened, as the very first inmate. At the end of two or three years, according as the penitent conducted herself, she would be placed in some suitable situation, among those who would keep a watch over her, and guard her still from the ways of temptation. If Jessie persisted in the denial of the burglary, but confessed the theft of the brooch, especially if she could restore it, Constance still engaged to cease from further legal proceedings, and still offered her an asylum in the penitentiary, but not on such favourable terms as before : Jessie must not, in this case, expect to be treated in any respect as the first penitent in the establishment, or look for an eventual recommendation into a serious family. If, on the other hand, Jessie continued her obstinate denial of all guilt, and all knowledge of the circumstances, Constance repeated that she should feel it her duty to continue the prosecution to the utmost rigour of the law ; but she earnestly entreated the unhappy girl to have pity upon herself, as well as upon her prosecutor, and to spare both this most painful necessity, by speaking the truth. Jessie each time merely repeated what she had

said in her first letter, and distinctly declined all these overtures.

Constance's whole mind, in truth, seemed so imbued with the notion of her penitentiary, that she could view no event that by any possibility brought in the idea of guilt, except through that medium. It was the case in other instances. On the Sunday a school girl had been impertinent to her, owing, she thought, to bad management during her absence at Hastings. Her imagination immediately sprung forwards to the contingent fate of the unhappy girl, and she calculated that in a year and a half her pupil would be advanced enough in evil to add to the third instalment her institution would receive. Again, on that morning, which was Friday, Grace had been disappointed of a letter, which was to contain a check. Immediately Constance's active mind was at work. She imagined that the post-master's daughter, whom she had never liked, she said, had detained the letter, and that either Grace would never see it, or would receive it with the check abstracted. It was evident that the penitentiary was in her head, though at this time she did not mention it. Grace had perceived these and numberless other instances of the same nature. The desire of doing good and benefiting the unfortunate, which they betrayed, softened very greatly to Grace's mind, conduct, and expressions, which otherwise she must have blamed more decidedly. She was falling into the habit of looking upon Constance's mind, as respected the penitentiary, as almost in a state of monomania; and Jessie's affairs had latterly become so involved with this scheme of the penitentiary, that Grace was inclined to link both together, since she found it quite impossible to conceal from herself, that neither Constance's feelings nor actions in this matter were at all in accordance with the temper and goodness she had always expected from such a character.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

.....a strange brooch.

Shakspeare.

GRACE had the day before received a note from her new acquaintance, Miss Fuller, which set her much at rest as regarded Jessie. The note was a characteristic one, and may as well be inserted without alteration.

My dear Miss Leslie,

I make no excuse for troubling you with a line. Under the circumstances of our meeting, we cannot feel as strangers, but rather as allies, bound together by the ties of a good cause. You need not fear for your *protégée*. I have by dint of coaxing, bantering, and scolding, got poor Mrs. Childe to promise to keep Jessie in her house; but, if her heart fails her on a reviving vision of the Bow-street officers, papa has given me leave to extend to the interesting unfortunate my maternal protection; and that, in my humble opinion, would be better than Constance's penitentiary. I am leaving you all the worst of the business, in allowing you the task of breaking all these unwelcome pieces of news "to the family;" but, in the present instance, I know I cannot please them (i. e. the head and heart of Constance) and you at the same time, and the spirit which led you to Ringtown will very well carry you through the terrors that await you. After all, I must say I envy rather than pity you. Pray use my name in any way you choose, never forgetting my regards to all the family, and

Believe me, yours very sincerely,

JULIA FULLER.

Grace had communicated the first news of Mrs. Childe's change of purpose in keeping Jessie under her roof, on her return from Ringtown, on Wednesday. She did this towards the end of the evening, when the family had somewhat recovered from the sensation the news concerning Mr. Guppy had excited, and her announcement was followed by a burst of displeasure from Constance and Mary Anne, both of whom accused Mrs. Childe of breaking her promise. But Constance's indignation soon turned upon Julia Fuller, who, she said, was always sure to oppose every thing that came from herself, since Julia was a worldly frivolous character, and an enemy to every thing serious.

Grace was applied to for her opinion. "I saw but little of Miss Fuller," replied she, smiling, "but as in this case she took the view I believe to be the true one, of course I liked her."

"Now I am sure she cavilled at me and my doings," cried Constance, "and mocked all I did and said; now did she not, Grace?"

"She talked of you, and every thing else," replied Grace, laughing; "and you, who know her, can guess better than I can remember what she said, for it seemed to me she had said and would say the very same things before your face."

Grace's manner saved her from any further questions. Constance had never yet allowed herself to feel that any question she had ever asked of any human being was an impropriety; but, though scarcely aware of it, she had often been checked and turned aside by a something about Grace.

The next morning, Thursday, the subject was mentioned at breakfast, and Mrs. Duff took it up rather decidedly, telling Constance that her papa had made up his mind that no public examination should at present take place; he would not hear of Bow-street officers again.

"And I think, Constance," added her mother, "it is too soon to make ourselves the talk of the place again; I think we have heard enough of Bow-street officers."

This remark of Mrs. Duff's related to an affair that had taken place some short time before, which it is not necessary to detail. It aroused a long discussion in the family, which proved, that circumstances, such as those connected with the Lost Brooch, were not entirely new, nor the idea of Bow-street officers perfectly original. This was one of the occasions when the subject was more freely pursued after Mrs. Duff's absence. Grace however escaped this discussion; she followed Mrs. Duff in order to propose writing to Mrs. Childe, and mention the circumstance she had just heard, of Mr. Duff having made up his mind to proceed at present no further in the examination concerning the lost brooch. She observed, that it would be a great relief to Mrs. Childe's mind to know that there need be no more fear of Bow-street officers.

Grace was always uncommonly fortunate in her applications to her hostess. There was a certain mesh missing in the fringe frame, and Mrs. Duff was glad of this early opportunity of making enquiries after it. She therefore readily gave the leave required, desiring Grace however not to talk about what had been done, and giving a message concerning the mesh.

By the next day's post Grace received a very hurried letter from Emily at Hastings, in reply to hers written on the Wednesday from Ringtown. As Emily is such an old acquaintance, the hastiness of her style and sentiments will perhaps be pardoned, and her letter shall be given entire.

My dear Grace,

Your letter made me at once crazy and savage; crazy, because I could do so little, and savage to have to do with such a cross-patch as that old North. As

to Constance, she really is more weak and silly than even I gave her credit for ; and that is saying a good deal, and more than I should dare to do to you, except by paper and ink, for I confess I am more swayed by your demure looks, than by the whole race of cross-patches, and the redoubtable Constance herself to boot. Not that I mean to give up, Grace, the outright laugh, which I mean some day to eclipse those demure looks at the expense of our well-beloved cousin. Now I dare say you are scolding me, not only for writing all this stuff, but for doing so instead of coming to the point, and sending you the evidence you require. Therefore in self-defence, as well as to punish you for your presumption in taking your seniors to task, I shall inflict upon you the history of my acts and cogitations of the morning. When your letter arrived, we were at a hasty breakfast, with the carriage at the door. We were going to Battle Abbey, which you remember is the only lion we have not seen, and we were preparing to note down all the spots, celebrated in the romance of Fanny and Osmond. We were obliged to be home early enough to make some of our P.P.C's, for you know we leave Hastings on Saturday ; so after I had read your letter, I perceived at once that I must give up Battle Abbey, and set about gathering up evidence from Hanson, *alias* Edwards, and Kitty, the housemaid over the way. Papa, who came back last night, and mamma both wished me to do the very best I could, and papa promised to overlook what I had done, and see if it was all got up in lawyer-like style.

It was very good of mamma to let me off going to Battle Abbey, for by doing so she had the trouble of all the children alone, which is what she particularly dislikes. Hanson would have gone, but I wanted her head and her memory. The moment they drove from the door, I had a conference with Hanson. In the first place, I found that Kitty, the housemaid, the day after North left, that is,

last Tuesday, walked off, Hanson believes, to be married to one of Mr. Badcock's congregation, whom North had recommended to Kitty's especial notice, as a very pious young man, an occasional preacher. No one knew where Kitty was gone, or any thing about her, so early evidence was hopeless there ; and, in fact, the more I considered the matter, the less necessary did evidence from this quarter appear. Hanson, in a little time, quite agreed with me ; she remarked of herself, that it seemed to her that the charge against Jessie lay entirely on the matter of the thieves, (meaning the night we were visited by the ghost of the poor nephew) and not on the lost brooch. By the bye, I should have been sharp enough to detect Constance's false dates, even if you had not reminded me ; and I should have detected her mistakes quicker than you did, knowing, as I do, her extreme inaccuracy in delicate details, notwithstanding the vastness of her pretensions for general correctness in matter-of-fact. To return to Hanson, however ; she looked again at your papers, and said there was nothing to lay hold of against Jessie on that score, except the actual absence of the brooch ; but that if the brooch was found, all the charges against her, concerning that night, would remain : so that she advised, by all means, following your directions, and clearing Jessie on this matter to the utmost. Of herself, she remarked, as you did, that the strongest evidence—indeed, almost the only evidence—against Jessie, was North's assertion, or fancy, that Jessie rose in the night and left the room. She undertook to make a stir in the house over the way, and go to Mrs. White's, and learn any possible tidings of this unhappy brooch.

I am not the least surprised at my words coming true, I did feel so sure every time I saw that miserable appendage of Constance's, that, like some hapless deformed specimen of nature, it was born to make a noise in the world,

as did the horse with his head where his tail should be. Its like—so it is not utterly peerless—as Jessie witnesses, has already figured at a fair, as did its prototype the said horse ; and this brooch—this strange brooch—this royal brooch—this lost brooch—doubtless is reserved for still more honourable fame. On Hanson's return from her examination, she was of the same mind, viz. to do nothing at all ; and when papa returned, and I explained what we had done, he quite approved, and said that Hanson and I together had proved police officers, attorney, barristers, judge, and jury at once. With this testimony I hope you will be satisfied, for I can do nothing at Hastings, nor indeed till I see you at Winterton, which I hope will be early on Monday. It cannot be before, unfortunately. Only entreat Constance.....No, I will write it down myself for you to cut off and give her, for I dare say you will not like to be the medium of my impertinent messages. However I will tell it to you for your benefit,—Entreat Constance not to make herself more absurd and ridiculous than she is already, by sending in Bow-street officers to search Jessie's boxes. Hoping this letter will set you quite at rest,

Believe, me, &c.

EMILY WARD.

Grace held this letter in her hand, after she had read it, in utter amaze. "Surely," thought she, "it must be Emily, and not my senses in fault." Then she read the letter over again more carefully, and found her surprise increase more and more. "Not a word of counter-evidence !" thought she ; "not a single notice or satisfactory reply to any one point ! yet how near she comes to the most interesting and important point of all !—the key !" Grace did not forget that Emily had not heard about Martha and the key ; "but why did not Hanson remember about that incident ! This was not at all like either Emily or Hanson." Yet in spite of these reflections, the letter did set Grace a

good deal at rest, because she trusted in her friend's sense and judgment. Once more she read.—The arguments throughout were still so unaccountable and incoherent, that Grace felt in a moment that either Emily was no longer Emily, or that there were grounds for her conduct, not desirable to explain. Perhaps Emily knew facts, which it would not be comfortable for Grace either to mention or not to mention at Grove House; or it might be, that Emily wished to tell things her own way. Something there was; that seemed certain; else why not send, or at least take, Hanson's evidence, which did not seem to have been done. Grace could almost have come to the conclusion that the brooch was actually safe in Emily's hands, had not Emily confessed that *it* alone was not now sufficient to clear Jessie from suspicion and reproach. The more she considered however, the more she became satisfied from the tone of the letter, that there was no cause for uneasiness, and that matters were progressing satisfactorily. She could now easily wait in patience, since poor Jessie was relieved from the terror of a visit from the Bow-street officers, and of a disgraceful dismissal without a home to go to.

It may seem singular that Emily made no allusion to the *denouement* concerning Mr. Guppy. The fact was, that Grace wrote from Ringtown in very great haste, and she also thought that, as there was no call upon her to spread the news she had just heard, it was therefore better to let Mrs. Duff and her family become acquainted with it in the first instance; so she did not mention it to Emily at all. The postscript to Constance was written on one of the turnings, and contained the following words:—

“ Let me beseech you, my dear Constance, not to make yourself as notorious as silly, by sending in Bow-street officers to search Jessie's boxes. If Bow-street officers must search boxes, let them set to work upon your own;

at any rate, wait till you see us and hear what we have to say. We mean to come on Monday, and, as before arranged, to carry Grace back with us to Fulham.

N. B.—Remember we are to carry Grace back with us on Monday.”

Constance certainly felt more uneasiness at the tone of these few lines, than at any thing else that had happened ; there was a decision and certainty about them, that seemed only warrantable by being in possession of some very incontrovertible evidence. But on the other hand, she called to mind Emily's character and manner, and was satisfied to think that Mary Anne was right in calling her cousin's words a flourish and nothing else.

While Constance was drawing these conclusions, Mary Anne was endeavouring to persuade Grace to show her Emily's letter. It was a scene Grace had daily to encounter with all her letters from the Wards, and also with those from Miss Fuller. Grace was perhaps over precise in matters at all approaching confidence ; she fancied that people might not say exactly the same thing in exactly the same way to two persons under different circumstances, and she had a great dread of making mischief by inconsiderateness. It is true she had imagined that she might have the comfort of throwing aside this caution with the Duff family ; but she had found, especially since she had been domesticated with them, that among so many of different characters and opinions, it was still necessary to be guarded. That very morning Mrs. Duff had herself charged her to observe silence on having written to Mrs. Childe. The charge startled Grace, but at the same time it caused her to observe how she herself had been, hour by hour, growing into a reserve on certain subjects very similar to this of Mrs. Duff's ; and she thought, “ Certainly the Duffs are not exactly what I expected ; I suppose it must be owing to their being a large family.”

CHAPTER XXIX.

The rich repast prepare.

Dryden.

EMILY'S postscript to Constance caused many remarks, and in the end Grace's departure on the Monday was talked of. It did not seem acceptable, though the manner in which it was taken up by the sisters did not give the impression of their objection to Grace's leaving being of a personal nature. There was a tone of disappointment and displeasure, but the regret appeared more that the guest was leaving, than that she was not staying.

"I wonder why Emily chose to mention it to you, Constance, and not to Grace," said Mary Anne.

"I am very sorry it must be so," said Charlotte, "but you know it was settled beforehand, and we knew Grace must go on Monday or Tuesday."

"Oh, you know people always stay longer than they say," replied Mary Anne; "I am sure mamma will not like it at all."

Grace here proposed to Mary Anne to set to work at once upon her painting, as she hoped to see the task they had set themselves finished before her departure, and she reminded them of the dinner party, which would take up all the latter part of the day.

"And pray why?" asked Constance; "I am sure if I had any thing of tolerable importance to do, I would not allow any party to interfere."

"But you dine down stairs, do you not?" said Grace,

"and would it not seem rude or strange if you left the party?"

"Oh, we are not so formal as that," replied Constance ; "besides I like to sit loose to the world, I never stay if there is an opportunity of my doing more good elsewhere. I shall stay to-day, because there are some girls coming who I think are seeking the truth, and I mean to help them on their way ; but Mary Anne can do just as she pleases."

"I am sure, if we are not expected," said Grace, "nothing would please me better than to sit with Mary Anne painting all the evening, and not to appear at all."

"Oh, there is no occasion for that," said Mary Anne ; "I do not see why I am not to be of service to the Larkins, and Sophy Rolles, as well as Constance. Besides mamma never lets me off, as she does Constance. I am the eldest—that makes all the difference ! People would think it so odd if I did not appear."

"Very well, then," said Grace, "I will do just as you please, I like to see strangers sometimes ; and besides you are going to have your clergyman, Mr. Taylor, who is such a good and pleasant man ; I wish much to see him in a room."

The Miss Duffs professed to make no preparations of any kind for a party ; but it is evident that somebody must make some provision, especially where the entertainment consists of dinner for eighteen persons. The labour however in the family on these occasions, was very unequally divided, for Mrs. Duff laid upon herself and her youngest daughter a heavier burden at such times than was at all necessary or usual. Constance literally "made no difference," and Mary Anne had no labour but that of the toilette. Grace had been well laughed at, at luncheon, for offering her services in any thing they might have to do. "Oh," cried Mary Anne, "mamma and Charlotte attend to such things ;

I am sure I should not know how to set about it, or what to do."

"I thought you might have flowers to set up, or something of that kind," said Grace; "flowers always make every thing bright, I think."

"Well, if they make the Larkins bright," said Constance, "it would be something."

"I am sure setting up flowers is more trouble than it is worth," said Mary Anne; "I had rather be a galley slave at once."

"And be tied to the oar by chains of roses, I suppose," said Campbell.

"I am sure, girls," observed Mrs. Duff, "I wish you would take a little trouble at such times, and make the rooms look as they ought, and not full of litter of all sorts, as they generally do. If Grace Leslie likes to set up flowers, I can only say I shall be much obliged to her, for I am sick and tired of the sight of the old dry artificial flowers on the table—always the same! but I cannot use our epergne without the flowers."

Now it happened that when Grace offered to set up flowers, she thought of the drawing-room, and had her eye upon certain dispositions of flowers, which had struck her as she spoke. Grace, in common with many other young ladies who have never been burdened with the cares of housekeeping, never let the thought of the dinner table cross her mind; she treated the hospitable board as though it were a productive garden, where soup, fish, meat, poultry, and sweets, thrive and grew spontaneously. In fact, she had a supreme contempt for this part of an entertainment. She paid the dessert a little more respect, and would willingly have expended her labour on its decoration. She made however no objection to her hostess's proposals, and, with somewhat of a grudging hand and heart, built up a most brilliant Temple of Flowers, for the centre

of the dinner table. Mrs. Duff willingly gave her leave to decorate the dessert and the drawing-room, and allowed her a maid to assist in gathering the flowers, of which the garden offered a profuse supply. Campbell, however, was her chief assistant in this employment, and, under her directions, became a most efficient ally. Grace was sorry to lose this time from Mary Anne's painting, and Mary Anne was vexed, for she had become so used to work with Grace, that her hand seemed paralyzed without her helpmate at her side. She did not like the feeling of this, and set herself to work here and there, about the picture, without bringing out any new effect at all ; indeed, she could fancy that wherever she had touched, her former strokes had been injured. So she turned to the faces which Grace had altogether declined interfering with, though Grace had advised her to do nothing without the originals before her.

CHAPTER XXX.

As soon as they his countenance did behold,
Began to faint, and feel their courage cold.

Spenser.

At length the party began to assemble, and if we could have heard the comments afterwards, we should have been satisfied that Grace's labours had not been thrown away, as far as *sensation* was concerned ; for the appearance of the room and the dinner table, especially the dessert, was so unlike that which was usually presented at the Duffs' parties, that it became a subject of general remark. It was called, "really elegant for the Duffs ;" " uncommonly

bright;" it made the young ladies—meaning the Miss Duffs—look absolutely brilliant; Charlotte was really beautiful; and even Constance, though dressed as usual, seemed quite another thing. Some were polite enough to take into account the appearance and manners of the new friend, "that very pretty and agreeable Miss Leslie, who, though so young, was as great an ornament to a room as any bright bouquet of flowers." Others placed the novelty of a pleasant evening at Grove House, to the account of the "young Oxonian;" people had "no idea any scholar could be so easy and agreeable; he had no pride at all, and one should not have known he knew more than his A B C."

Notwithstanding all this approbation, the details of the party, if related, would not give an impression of unmixed enjoyment; but if so, the preponderance of the agreeables of the evening is only more thoroughly established. An incident occurred at the very opening, which was sufficient to cast a damp over the rest of the proceedings of the evening.

The guests were nearly assembled, and the family all in the room excepting Constance, whose habit it was to employ herself till the moment dinner was announced, when she usually made her appearance at the dinner table. Mr. Taylor, the clergyman, his wife and daughter, arrived at this juncture. After the usual greetings, they seated themselves; enquiries concerning the Hastings excursion, and the hot summer, were languidly floating about. Presently, there came a pause altogether, a pause not at all unusual in conversations before dinner. Mr. Taylor rose and advanced towards Mary Anne, on the opposite side of the room, apologizing for not having spoken to her on her entrance; she advanced to meet him, saying, "I wondered, Mr. Taylor, where your eyes could be, and I was going to ask if you were offended."

"Offended, my dear Miss Duff!" said Mr. Taylor, kindly taking her hand, "that is quite impossible; and especially at this moment, when I feel every reason to be grateful to you for a mark of Christian sincerity."

"I do not know what," said Mary Anne, feeling rather awkward, though not displeased at this public announcement of a grave clergyman's thanks.

"I indeed owe you many thanks," continued Mr. Taylor, "for the faithful discharge of your conscience on the matter and manner of my discourses, and I am anxious to profit to the utmost by your valuable criticism."

Mary Anne began to wish that Mr. Taylor's expression of gratitude had ended before the last clause. He proceeded, "I hear my discourse on the last sabbath awoke your especial displeasure, and I am desirous of talking it over with you. Will you be so good as to notice the points which you judged most deserving of your censure?"

Mary Anne was perhaps as capable of doing what Mr. Taylor desired in the midst of company, as in a room by herself; but it did not seem so to her at that moment. She had been thinking of the individuals, and the number of them, who were witnessing the scene, and she had a general, rather than a particular idea of the sense of Mr. Taylor's words. She got more and more confused as Mr. Taylor repeated his question, and showed, by retaining her hand, which he held in a friendly manner, that he meant to obtain an answer. Mary Anne felt sure that the Miss Dawsons had reported the Sunday's conversation. On looking upon the matter from this side she thought of something to say. "Oh," cried she, in her off-hand manner, "I dare say the Dawsons have made much more of what I said than I meant."

"But I understood that you particularly wished to let me know your candid opinion, and I therefore give you this opportunity of stating it yourself without danger of

misconception or misrepresentation ;" and again he repeated his question concerning the erroneous doctrines in his sermon.

Mary Anne found that her unguarded speech had rather made matters worse than better for her ; and she began to be more bewildered than ever. If her hand had been free, she would have retreated to her seat in the best humour she could command ; but, as it was, that refuge was impossible ; and at last, beginning to be very much embarrassed, she replied, " I said you did not preach the Gospel."

" I know that, my dear Miss Mary Anne, I know that," returned her pastor, " but I am anxious to know in what respect you conceive I do not preach the Gospel. You are aware that the Anabaptists, Fifth Monarchy men, Antinomians, Hutchensonians, Dunkers, Jumpers, Ranters, and Brothertonians, have all cried out that we do not preach the Gospel."

The simple enumeration of these sects might create a smile, but no one in that room was inclined to give way to amusement, under the influence of Mr. Taylor's grave and earnest manner and tones. Several more sentences passed, to which Mary Anne essayed something of a reply ; but she herself felt the poverty of her attempt, and at length, smarting under the absence of her sister Constance, who was generally at hand on such occasions, and always ready to lend assistance, in tones of much distress she cried out, " You treat me in this way, because you know Constance is not in the room ; I don't see why I am to be insulted !" and she fairly burst into tears. At the same time she made an effort, withdrew her hand, and turned away to her seat, where she sat giving way to her feelings of distress and discomfort, till her sobs became painfully audible. Mr. Taylor followed her, with warm expressions of sorrow for the state she was in, protesting his surprise

and concern at one he conceived so firm and undaunted as Miss Duff showing symptoms of trouble ; if he had had any idea that Miss Duff was so unlike her sister Constance, he would have reserved his discussion for her, and very much more. The more he talked the more others spoke, and sympathized in Mary Anne's distress, which increased every moment. All had different pieces of advice for poor Mary Anne. Salts—hartshorn—burnt feathers—a little water—lie flat—walk about—sit still—go into the air—be fanned—go out of the room—do not stir. Such counsels resounded on all sides, and the more her friends advised, the more vehement became Mary Anne's grief, till it began to look exceedingly like an hysteric fit. Grace had never seen any one in any fit of the kind, whether it might go by the name of hysteric or any other, and her amaze was unspeakable. At the first appearance of annoyance in Mary Anne, as she stood talking with Mr. Taylor, Grace had taken an opportunity of speaking on some indifferent matter to her next neighbour, hoping to make a diversion in favour of Mary Anne on her side of the room, which might gradually spread. But Grace's good-natured scheme did not take ; the young lady, her neighbour, Miss Lar-kins, was as anxious as the rest of the room to hear the discussion from beginning to end, and after a few incoherent replies to Grace's remarks, she ceased to give any further opportunity of conversation. Grace had never before been in society where there seemed such a bluntness to the feelings of individuals. She sat distressed and amazed. Disturbed herself beyond expression at what she considered Mary Anne's painful situation, she could not understand why others were not so. She would have put any restraint on her curiosity, (had she felt it,) or exposed herself by any inconsequent unmeaning talk, rather than be witness of any such scene, painful as it was from beginning to end. During the conversation, she began to

think that Mary Anne was not really uncomfortable and embarrassed, as she appeared, and that she was herself a stranger to the feelings and manners of society at Winterton ; but Mary Anne's subsequent behaviour put the first idea out of question. On Mary Anne throwing herself into her chair, Grace, who was placed next, whispered to her a proposition of leaving the room ; but Mary Anne paid no attention, or rather all she heard seemed to make her worse and worse. She sobbed, and sighed, and vibrated on her chair, and uttered sounds of "unkind," "a shame," "do not deserve such treatment," till at length her voice became inaudible, and her manner was, as has been said, beginning to assume the appearance of hysterics.

It must be confessed that Grace had never felt her kindness and equanimity so much tried in her life ; the exposure seemed to her so degrading—degrading, not only to Mary Anne, but to humanity ; and also so unnecessary. Why did not Mary Anne leave the room when she found she could not command her feelings ? Mr. Taylor's perseverance seemed inconsiderate ; if Mary Anne did speak too publicly of his sermons, this was a severe punishment, and had she left the room quietly, many would have felt for her, and overlooked her mistake ; but who could ever forget the spectacle she had now presented, and was still presenting ! Grace, who had great controul over her feelings, especially in public, felt sure that Mary Anne might have checked at any moment the full flow of her tears and her sobs ; and probably she was perfectly right, for this was no fair representation of hysterics. But Mary Anne did not *wish*, most probably, to check herself. She did not see herself ; nor had she the mind to fancy what others would say or think of her ; but she felt for the moment the heroine of the room, and in that character she imagined that she was as good as replying to all Mr. Taylor's late remarks and arguments, and was gaining the

public sympathy away from him. It is very clear that a person with this belief and feeling would not much wish to check any impulses of distress. It might have been different with Mary Anne, if nobody had taken notice, and if none had begun to throng around in the first instance; but her mother, though herself strong in mind, and in the habit of being displeased at such manifestations of weakness in usual cases, always made allowance for Mary Anne; and in this case, being the hostess, the party, in politeness, conformed to her humour. It appeared as if the announcement of dinner alone could put an end to the scene; but some of the party were aware that the two principal guests of the evening had not yet arrived, and that probably Mrs. Baron would be as effective in Mary Anne's case, as leaving her to the solitude of the drawing-room. In the height of Mary Anne's ecstasy of distress, just as a move was being made for conveying her to a sofa, Mr. and Mrs. Baron were announced, and Mrs. Duff stepped forward to receive her guests, with three pocket handkerchiefs steeped in vinegar, eau de Cologne, and hartshorn, hanging upon her arm. "You come into a distressing scene," said she; "here is poor Mary Anne in one of her fits; her feelings are too much for her, and quite overcome her, poor thing."

"Hey, Mary Anne!" cried her new guest, stepping towards her without much ceremony, "What is this? pray do not let me see you make a goose of yourself again! Now, come stand up, I pray! there's a good girl; and shake off this nonsense."

So saying, she took hold of the invalid, and being a powerful person, of authoritative presence and manner, assisted both body and mind, as she said, "to shake off" the infirmity. Mrs. Baron made use of a few more sentences, in which the words,—"*disgraceful*," "*exposure*," were prominent. Her words seemed to have a magic ef-

fect ; for from the very first, Mary Anne's sobs, which were rising to a frightful height, began to abate, her tears to assuage, and in a few minutes Mrs. Baron was seen leading her young friend quietly to the door into the hall. When here, she shut the door, walked her about a little, gave her—what many in the room prognosticated—a good scolding, and ended with these words ;—" Now go up stairs, look in the glass, and see what a fright you are ; drink a little water, wash your face, and come down as much like yourself as you can, and we will try and forget what a silly part you have been acting."

Mary Anne, like a child, went and obeyed her commandant almost mechanically, and she did join the party at dinner very quietly, and for about a quarter of an hour felt and appeared in rather a subdued tone of spirits. Every body seemed to have forgotten all that had taken place, so perhaps Mary Anne was wise in doing the same, and in allowing her usual tone of spirits to return. Mrs. Baron had played the same sort of part towards Mr. Taylor, on her return to the drawing-room, as in the hall towards Mary Anne ; and no one could help being obliged to her for bringing all parties so well through a dilemma that threatened very unpleasantly. " Come, come," said she, " my good friends, the less said the better ; I dare say Mr. Taylor was inconsiderate, and I am sure Mary Anne was silly ; so let there be an end : shake hands if you please, and let us have a comfortable dinner, as we are sure to have a good one."

Mrs. Baron was a person of some consideration in the Winterton society, and one whom few could oppose or withstand ; nobody could do so here, and few wished it. So ended this affair at that moment ; but it became for a time a lesson to all young ladies at Winterton and some miles round, not to talk too freely of sermons in public—at least not of Mr. Taylor's—unless they were also prepared

for a public discussion on the subject with the preacher himself. Constance was always prepared for this ; but every one is not like Constance.

CHAPTER XXXI.

And likeness finds in things dissimilar.

Anon.

DURING dinner, the subject of the lost brooch was mentioned ; for its history, as might be expected, had been running about Winterton under different aspects, and every one was anxious to know the truth of the story. After dinner, Mrs. Baron, who seemed the leading spirit of the party, and by a certain dash and decision of manner threw into the back-ground all the Duffs, not excepting Constance, sought Grace, and had a long *tête-a-tête* with her. No one was more surprised than Grace herself at this distinction, for she considered herself the most insignificant of the party, and, as far as regarded such a person as Mrs. Baron, invisible : but Grace was invisible to none but herself. In spite of a mode and a manner very different from what Grace was accustomed to, she could not help liking Mrs. Baron. One cause might be, that this lady was bold enough to speak her mind publicly about Jessie—taking part with the accused, and blaming the Duffs' proceedings, as being unnecessarily, if not unjustly, hasty. She told them all Winterton thought so, though all did not say so, and that none but herself would dare to tell them so to their faces. Grace could not but

feel there was some truth in this, as only one lady before had spoken in any degree openly, though Grace perceived that many by no means approved of the Duff view of the case. However, besides this sympathy on the part of Mrs. Baron, there was a fearlessness of character about her which was sure to attract Grace.

The entertainments to be found at the Duffs' were very carefully selected, and duly produced on the occasion of a party. The principle of selection was not always one obvious to superficial observers. All games with cards and dice were of course excluded, and this all understood; but many were curious to know why chess and draughts were prohibited, while such more modern amusements as German tactics, spillikins, and the newly introduced game of "*le solitaire*," were allowed admission. But that which caused the greatest perplexity to those not exactly of the same opinions with the Duffs, was the very free allowance of puzzles; puzzles of all sorts, shapes, and sizes, were to be found on every table. Riddles and cross questions, and games with counters, and tee-totums, were also tolerated and permitted. Some thought the apparent want of principle in the selection, originated in these games and plays being the recreations of the Duffs in their childish days, and thus that they were continued in the more mature years of the family, and were presented for the amusement of their guests. But however the public curiosity was aroused on the subject, none chose to enquire into the cause, for there was so little variety of conversation going on at these parties, that there was a general fear of chasing away from them those entertainments which, although childish, afforded some amusement. Music they had, and this evening rather more than usual, partly owing to the presence of Grace, for she was frequently required to play, and the Miss Duffs thought themselves bound to return her kindness each time by a

piece of their own. They played nothing but duets, generally Mozart's overtures, or pieces of Rossini ; but by some ill fortune they always got very long pieces of the latter composer, which they played very slow, and Grace, among many others, could not recognize any cadence as one she had ever heard before. Charlotte played in very different style from her sisters ; Grace had never heard her before, and was much surprised at the originality and spirit of her touch. Grace was asked very often to play, by guests ; so often, that she felt rather annoyed, because both Mary Anne and Constance, especially the former, were accustomed to make remarks upon her execution, which led her to fancy it was of a sort they particularly disliked ; she had therefore more than once played only a simple melody, such as she thought could displease no one. Grace had a very full, rich, and powerful touch ; but what rendered her manner striking, in even a simple air which any one might play, was her scientific, yet sure harmony, and the effective management of her basses ; nevertheless, her style was perfectly unprofessional and entirely lady-like. Persons without musical knowledge, calling themselves merely fond of music, perhaps possessing the truest musical taste, were always struck by her chords, and attracted to the piano. Thus, on this night, she was called upon by the bystanders, for a variety of favourite airs, in rotation. One was "Robin Adair." When she had ceased, she asked Campbell, who stood close by, if he had ever noticed how similar this air was to "God save the King." Upon this question, Mary Anne burst out laughing, repeating the question, and adding, "Really, Grace Leslie, you have such strange notions, like no one else ! Who but yourself would ever have thought of such a thing ! I am sure nobody else would ever find a likeness."

"Indeed I think you all will, if you listen," said Grace,

laughing. "I am quite willing to try the experiment, and I ought to be willing to abide the test."

There was a general call from those around the piano for the trial. Grace premised that her hearers must be so kind as to be patient, and allow some license to the first part of the melodies; indeed she laid no stress on the likeness of the latter cadence of the first part—upon all the rest she would allow them to be critically severe. Mary Anne was beginning to object to this, and call it a "get off," but others were more lenient, and Mary Anne was silenced. Begging her hearers to follow her with the National Anthem in their minds, Grace began what appears the much lighter melody of Robin Adair. Whether it was the skill of her play and her management in so combining the melody and harmony of the two airs; whether that the minds of the audience had been attuned, as it were, into the strains by Grace's previous request, and by her having at the same moment touched a few notes of the other air, and so were fascinated into her idea, whether it was from politeness, or from there being actually and truly a similarity in the two tunes, shall be left for the reader to conjecture; but the decision was in a moment unanimous in her favour, and she was made to repeat the two airs several times over for the amusement and satisfaction of her judges, till at length the whole room was attracted by the strains and the animated enthusiasm of the musical *coterie*. If Grace had desired a triumph, she might have been satisfied, since after several times hearing the strains, Mary Anne with entire deliberation mistook the one air for the other. Mary Anne, in explanation, declared that Grace Leslie had so mixed them up together, it was impossible to tell them apart, and Grace said she quite entered into the feeling, which was partly what she meant to produce.

"The doubt is, Mary Anne," observed Campbell,

"whether Grace could be as successful with any other two given airs."

"It is good that Campbell is the first to discover this wonder," replied Mary Anne, turning to her brother, who had from the first been warm in his appreciation of the idea, "Campbell, who has no more ear than a post, and cannot tell 'I've been roaming' from the 100th psalm."

"Well, you know," said Charlotte, "George has lately reminded us that walls have ears, and perhaps posts are becoming as fortunate."

"I suppose you will laugh at me again, Mary Anne," said Grace, laughing herself, "if I say that Campbell would show some discrimination even in that mistake, for 'I've been roaming' is a fine old Roman Catholic chant, and so carries with it a character of psalmody."

This fact was not then so generally known as it is now ; the then popular air mentioned having only lately made its appearance in the form of a ballad ; and Mary Anne, though suffering from the public voice so unanimously opposed to her, stated her incredulity as openly as on the former occasion, adding, "You only take Campbell's part because he was on your side."

"Grace is bound to do so in common gratitude," said Campbell.

"Then," added another young gentleman, "I am happy to say that Miss Leslie is equally bound to the whole room, and that when any one of us is in distress, he may claim the debt."

Grace had risen from the piano, but she was forcibly constrained to seat herself again and play "I've been roaming" as the chant she stated it to be. It was a fine subject for her touch and her science, and she did it justice. They who heard her play such grave melodious airs as those here mentioned, could never have believed she had as rare a thrill of execution, as depth of tone and pathos ; while

Charlotte, who had only heard her in light brilliant pieces, was equally struck the other way. After the audience was thinned about the piano, Charlotte began questioning her ; "I cannot think, Grace," said she, "how you have managed to get such a touch as you have,—do you know?"

Grace laughed.—"I should be inclined to ask the same question of you," said she, "and meant to do so at some convenient time."

The modest Charlotte thought her half in jest, and pressed her former question.

"Well," said Grace, "I am conscious of having studied the subject ; that is, I have observed tones and sounds from my very early youth, and I know what I formed my taste and my standard upon."

"Well, and what?" cried Charlotte, a good deal pleased at what appeared a just piece of discernment on her part.

"As far as I could upon mamma's voice, tone, and expression," replied Grace. "When I was quite a little girl I used to listen to these, and think if there could be an instrument made like—or only formed on that model, how exquisite it would be ! And when we had a new piano, one day it came into my head that the tones of it—at least the bass tones—might be made to resemble mamma's manner a little. I always kept this in my head at any rate, and the great desire I had to 'mock mamma,' as I always called it, helped me to cultivate very carefully my left hand, and led me also into the study of the science of music ; for considering my left hand as a representation of mamma, I was very anxious to avoid false or unrefined harmony. You know mamma's singing is exactly like herself."

Had Mary Anne been within hearing, Grace could never have got through this account without many interruptions and exclamations on her "strange thoughts and fancies ;" but in Charlotte she had an interested auditor, who loved both the subject and the speaker, and who had a power

which her sister Mary Anne, it seems, had not, of apprehending "strange thoughts and fancies," though presented to her for the first time.

Campbell joined them presently, and they had a few minutes discussion on music, tones, and sounds, which seemed a long talk to Grace, so pleasantly and originally did both the brother and sister bring many illustrations and remarks to bear on the subject. Grace thought that Campbell's appreciation of sounds was particularly correct and cultivated, considering his sister Mary Anne's view. The fact was, Campbell knew nothing of music, and made rather a boast of his ignorance; he took little pains to remember one tune from another, but he had a soul of melody, and could discourse upon the subject like a scholar, most excellently.

After the guests had departed, Mrs. Duff, expressing much satisfaction at the success of the entertainment, thanked Grace for the part she had taken in the adornment, as well as in the entertainment, of the company. Grace was pleased at this piece of kindness, but she had had no idea she was doing any thing so formidable as entertaining any portion of guests. She made however no remark, since she found her ideas on general matters were not always pleasing, and it might prove so here. Mrs. Duff gaped, threw herself on a couch, and declared that the labour of preparation beforehand, and of entertaining of the party afterwards, was a great deal more trouble than the thing was worth, and that her girls ought to be much obliged to her for the pleasure, and for her taking all the toil off their hands. Campbell, in an amusing manner, made a boast of his portion of toil on the present occasion, in helping at the flowers, and at the same time thanked his mother, declaring that he had had a very pleasant evening; but his two eldest sisters protested against such parties being made up for their sake, Constance declared that they

were much against her notions of strictness, and Mary Anne that she did not care about them.

After this Mary Anne's opening incident was discussed in all its bearings, to Grace's exceeding surprise. She thought Mary Anne would have disliked any allusion to it most exceedingly, but that did not appear to be the case at all.

CHAPTER XXXII.

Disdaining little delicacies.

Thomson.

SOME persons may be curious to know how such a one as Constance Duff would comport herself in any scene of the nature of a party, and for their satisfaction the following account is inserted. It has been mentioned that she generally did not appear till the moment dinner was announced. This practice was illustrative of her principle of devoting no time, to what she considered mere amusement. She carried the same principle into her dress. On such days as this she made a point of appearing in precisely the dress she had happened to put on in the morning, but with Constance this did not very much matter, as whatever she put on, always looked like what she had just taken off. In the drawing-room after dinner she was not long before she fixed upon the young lady, for whose sake principally she consented to appear at all. With her she seated herself at the principal table in the room—as it happened, a large round rosewood one. A few persons in the first instance had attached themselves to her, but by degrees all but the young lady before-mentioned, Miss Rolles, joined other groups. Constance was no great worker, indeed her chief time for exercising her needle was on occa-

sions like the present, and she had provided herself with sufficient employment for the evening. The contents of her basket were soon spread upon the table, for like persons unaccustomed to an art, she could not arrange her materials or manage her tools with neatness or dexterity. Her employment was two-fold, because she hoped to induce her companion to employ herself in the same way. But there was a hinderance in the opening ; Constance had no thimble for herself, much less any one to lend her friend. She had also no implements for work. However Charlotte supplied all the deficiencies, and, with Mary Anne's thimble, the working appointments were at length complete. Constance had in hand a patchwork quilt for a child's bed, or larger, according to her measure of thriving among her friends in amassing pieces of print, linen, &c. She was not at all particular, for she wished to make a useful thing, not a pretty one ; and she considered with great justice that a quantity of time, labour, and material was sacrificed to beauty, or even uniformity, in patchwork ; her plan was therefore to sew in each piece as much in its own native shape, that is, the shape in which it came into her hands, as possible. The present quilt had been in hand about a year, and she had of the composition above described, about a yard square. Nobody could say it was beautiful, but nobody could deny that it might be useful, and nobody could affirm that Constance might have spent her time better ; for when she was employed upon this work, others were doing nothing that they could produce.

The other piece of work was tippets for the school children, such as are well known to all economists, made of the list torn from the sides of the best Welch flannel. This was also supplied to Constance by her charitable friends, and she had quantities rolled up in large balls. These looked inoffensive enough, but the other work was, whether finished or in the rough, an indescribable chaos ; scrap upon

scrap, and roll upon roll were laid upon the table, presenting to the uninitiated eye a mass of the most startling confusion. If all had been white, or if all had been smooth, or cut into form and sorted, or if all had been of the delicate appearance to be expected in the public needlework of a lady, or even if a modest reserve in their exhibition had been observed,—if the operator had chosen a less conspicuous situation, possibly none but the ultra-fastidious would have objected; possibly also she would have made more progress, created less observation, and obtained more opportunity of useful conference with her friend. But Constance was not of a character to consider much about such things. She chose to be in the party, she chose to talk to Miss Rolles, and to nobody else, and she chose to work at the round table, so she did all, and she did not care what people said, or what people thought; she was satisfied that she had done her duty, and discharged her conscience.

Constance had a third piece of work, which at first she sought for, hoping to induce one of the Miss Larkins to join her industrious table; but the knitting was no where to be found, till Grace perceiving the stir about the room, and discovering its object, remembered that she had for one instant had a glimpse of the said knitting the day before in the paws of the merciless kitten. It was at last found in one corner of the hall.

“Well,” observed Constance, “if you saw my knitting, Grace, I think you might as well have taken care of it.”

Grace remembered how entirely the thought of the knitting had passed from her mind, during the excitement of the conversation concerning Newton Grey; but she simply replied, “If it is my fault, pray let me set it right,” and she accordingly took the work, and in a short space had restored the entangled mass to order and regularity.

Constance continued at her employment the whole evening, except when she rose to take part in duets with her

sister. Some of the company at first occasionally addressed her on her industry, but, in a short space, she was left entirely to pursue her plans undisturbed. She had some tracts on the table, over which she talked incessantly with her companion. At length this young lady began to be wearied both with her employment, and with feeling she was with Constance an object of remark to the rest of the room, she therefore mingled with the concourse round the piano the first time that Constance rose to play ; and Mrs. Baron afterwards asserted, that Miss Rolles was guilty of as many manœuvres to avoid contact with Constance the rest of the evening, as a novice in a ball-room to avoid an unacceptable partner. Constance certainly felt that Miss Rolles might have again taken her seat as before if that young lady had greatly desired it ; and she could not help being vexed and disappointed at what seemed to her a dereliction from duty. But it would be more fair to give Constance's feelings on the occasion in her own words ; in her diary that night, she wrote, " This evening we had a dinner-party ; a vain waste of time I fear, certainly an occasion of vanity to some, but productive I trust of some little good to others. I made some progress in my labour of love for the bodies of my fellow-creatures, and I hope also I worked at the same time for souls. The example of one not wearied in well doing is something, and with some loving ' guile,' I caught S. R. into my net. I talked and read to her incessantly, and brought home so many truths to her conscience, that I feel persuaded they must make an impression. Yet, alas ! the instability and the weakness of the human heart ! She stumbled at the offence of the cross, could not bear the scoffs of the world, and I was left alone....." Constance added much more, but the above extract is sufficient to show that Constance's views of Christian action, however sincere, were of a very limited order ; and that from her making herself, at her early years too,

the standard of Christian obedience and perfection, there is the less probability of her views being correct at the present moment, and the less prospect of their becoming more sound as she grows older. But this is not always the case ; humility sometimes begins at one age, and sometimes at another, and we can have no reason to think it is not to be attained by any, at any time, who see their former errors and mistakes, and resolutely follow truth for the future.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

How happy is he born or taught,
That serveth not another's will ;
Whose armour is his honest thought,
And simple truth his highest skill.

Sir Henry Wotton.

THE next morning, at breakfast, the following comments on the party occurred.

"How surprised I was," said Mary Anne, "to see Mrs. Baron have such a long talk with Grace Leslie ; what could you be talking of, Grace ?"

Grace, a little startled at so sudden an appeal, answered, "Oh, several things ; really I hardly know what ; talking is not a very difficult matter with Mrs. Baron, I should think. She seems a very clever woman, and ready to talk to any body."

"There you are wrong, Grace," said Constance ; "she is ready to talk only to those she chooses."

"Well, she talked very sensibly and pleasantly to me," said Grace, smiling, "so I have every reason to be satisfied."

"Ah, I dare say she talked about the lost brooch," said Mary Anne, "or—or—Mr. Taylor's inconsiderateness, as she called it. I do not half like Mrs. Baron; I think her so very satirical."

"She is so overbearing," observed Constance; "every body—that is, *almost* every body—must give way where Mrs. Baron deigns to appear."

"Every body but a kindred spirit, Constance," said Campbell, good-humouredly.

"Now that is not fair, Campbell," observed Grace, "because if people are really overbearing, it ought to be some body's place to set things right; and we ought to be thankful to any who take upon themselves the unpleasant office."

"Well then, Grace," said Campbell, "you shall take it upon yourself next time; and we will send you up a vote of thanks afterwards."

"I! oh no, not I!" cried Grace, laughing, "I am nobody. People must be judged by their peers, at the least. You must set *me* among children."

"That is a very false principle, Grace," said Constance, "all are peers; all are equal, as Christians."

"But then, Constance," observed Mary Anne, not clearly seeing the drift of the argument, "do you think Mrs. Baron a Christian?"

"That is nothing to the purpose," said Constance; "if I feel that I am a Christian, what does it signify whether others are or not? I must not hide my talent in a napkin;—I must not suffer sin in others."

"Still, Constance," said her brother, "there is the injunction, 'rebuke not an elder.'"

"Ah! there we always differ!" said Constance; "I

consider that clearness of views, and advancement in holiness, give the right of eldership to Christians. Even under the Jewish dispensation, we read, 'the elder shall serve the younger.'"

"That is not the right way of treating the precepts I allude to, Constance, which are precepts of the gospel, as you well know."

"Of course I do," said Constance, "and also I have a right to my own view of the matter; I cannot bring my conscience under the trammels of another's."

A slight interruption occurred here, and the subject was dropped.

"What a disagreeable young man William Taylor is!" said Mary Anne, presently; "I think he is worse every time I see him. What could you find, Grace, to talk to him about, all that time? I thought you and he seemed very close;—don't you think him very disagreeable?"

"Not exactly disagreeable," said Grace, while she endeavoured to recall to mind the exact impression he had made upon her; "not entirely disagreeable; though I know what you mean, Mary Anne; at the same time, I thought him very clever and amusing, though I was surprised that he was the son of a religious man, like Mr. Taylor."

"Oh, I don't think much of that," said Mary Anne; "religious people, as I said the other day, generally have irreligious children; but he is so complimentary and disagreeable."

"Complimentary!" cried Grace, surprised, "that is the last thing I should have said! I thought him very hard upon every body; too much so if he was always in earnest."

"Oh, then he did not take to you, I dare say," observed Mary Anne; "he is so complimentary to all of us, that we cannot bear the sight of him!"

"Why, Grace," continued Constance, "though I was

not attending to any thing going on, I could not help hearing his compliments to you, before every body at the piano!—Surely those were compliments!"

"Oh, if you call those compliments," said Grace, "I know what you mean. I had not observed it;—all that is in jest."

"Well, it is a very stupid jest," said Constance, "to tell a woman that the whole room owes her a debt of gratitude for playing a tune, or something of that sort."

"You were so engrossed by your patchwork, Constance," said Campbell, "that I do not wonder at your not hearing correctly at that distance what actually passed....."

"I was not engrossed by my patchwork, Campbell," said Constance, interrupting her brother; "my thoughts are always free, though my fingers are employed."

"I am sure, Constance, I felt it almost a shame to be idle," said Grace, "while you were so hard at work."

"That is a silly speech, Grace," said Constance, "and not very sincere, for you could have helped any moment if you had pleased."

"Well, I said—*almost*," said Grace, more gravely; "but, as it happened, I felt no disposition to offer to help you."

"And why not?" asked Constance.

"Why really I quite wondered at you," said Grace, laughing; "how could you choose that time for such work?"

"Why not?" asked Constance; "we ought never to spend an unprofitable hour."

"But if you must work, which it was all very well to do if you chose," said Grace, "why did you not take up your favourite bobbin or knitting, which would have made no show or talk, and which you could have got on with without any body observing it."

Grace spoke in a bright rallying tone. There was a

little pause. Constance perhaps, from what we have seen of her private thoughts, did not like what she considered a great act of self-denial to be treated in this way. "The fact is, Grace," said she, "you fear Christian strictness, and have not strength of mind to bear the jeers of the world."

Grace found she must be a little more serious than she had intended, and with a raised colour exclaimed earnestly, "Oh, no, indeed, Constance, if I thought it right, I think—I am sure—I would do the same."

"What! in your fairy-looking dress, Grace!" said Campbell, laughing; "what! sit down by Constance's side and set to work at her rags, with all of us looking on and drawing contrasts!"

"Yes, if I thought it right," persisted Grace.

"Then you mean to say I was not right, I suppose," said Constance.

"Oh, no, I did not," said Grace; "if you thought it right and proper, I should never think of preventing you; only I cannot help laughing a little at the idea."

Constance was a good deal vexed at this matter-of-fact style of treatment, and continued, "And I suppose you say my dress is wrong, and I ought to put on what Campbell chooses to call fairy-like things."

"Oh, no, indeed," said Grace, "I am sure you are quite right to dress as you do, if you like it, and if nobody about you objects to it; only, you know, *I* could not do as you do, I should feel quite affected and unnatural; and," added she, laughing, "I should be always thinking of myself, and fancying people were making remarks upon me."

Constance evidently disliked Grace's observations, but did not reply. Her mother took up Grace's words, commended her sentiments, and wished that Constance—indeed that all her daughters—would take example by Grace, who, she remarked, certainly looked very nice last night;

"Nothing was prettier for a young lady than white muslin," &c. &c.

Grace had not at all expected this turn to be given to the conversation, and felt vexed that she had allowed herself to be drawn into a talk, that had assumed something of a personal nature. She had been speaking in simplicity and with the utmost good humour, and was not aware that the subjects were as serious in the family, as she afterwards suspected they might be. Grace often erred in this manner. To do her justice on one portion of this conversation, it is necessary to relate a part of her discourse with the above-mentioned Mr. William Taylor. He sat next her at dinner, and rapidly entered into conversation on various subjects. When Mary Anne entered and took her seat at the table, he spoke a few words serio-comic to Grace, on their friend's late attack of hysterics. Grace could not quite understand in what humour he spoke. He went on in a grave tone, "Are *you* often afflicted with such attacks, Miss Leslie?"

Grace replied in the negative.

"But then I imagine," said her companion, "you do not possess the amiable Quixotism of our friend; self-indulgence escapes all suffering of a romantic character."

"I do not think that exactly," said Grace.

"Not!" exclaimed he, "where are your proofs?"

"The school of sentimentalists," replied Grace; "I should have thought there was no doubt of self-indulgence and suffering occurring together there."

"Very true," said the young gentleman, "and doubtless the present is a case in point."

"The present!" exclaimed Grace, "I was talking of no particular instance."

"But I was," returned the other; "I was imagining that you, not being endowed with the self-denial of our Mary Anne, escape her peculiar sensitive feelings."

Grace felt at a loss for an answer, so ambiguous was the tone of the speaker ; she said however, " We ought always to be glad to escape suffering, I suppose."

" Yes, and the witnessing it, *I* suppose," added Mr. Taylor, drily. Presently he continued, " Are you religious, Miss Leslie ?"

Perhaps the speaker was as doubtful as the listener as to the tone of this enquiry. He thought it might as well take its chance.

Grace felt very much annoyed ; " Really I do not understand you," said she.

" Oh, I thought you seemed a young lady who understands every thing !—Well, then, in other words, do you think all the Duffs do and say right ?"

" You seem to know so much more about me than I do myself," said Grace, smiling, " that I shall depute you to answer any such questions for me."

" Well, then, I should say by that reply that you are *not* religious," returned the young gentleman ; " and as I am not, I have no scruple in cutting up our good friends."

He then went on, making very strong remarks on Mary Anne's conduct—" exposure," as he called it—bringing in Constance, and the affair of the lost brooch, which was much talked about, he said. Grace never felt more awkwardly situated in her life, but constantly replied to his remarks, and at last succeeded in bringing the subject to generals, which ended in a really serious discussion.

On the gentlemen's entrance after dinner, this young Mr. Taylor came up to Grace, and began rallying her on her defence of religious people in general, and of the Duffs in particular ; bade her look at Constance and her chaos of rags. He said he had been calling her Cinderella, and made out wonderful similitudes, but that his remarks had not been graciously received, for that Cinderella in the fairy world, and Cinderella in the religious world, were

not of the same mould of meekness under persecution. Afterwards, when Miss Rolles deserted Constance, he attacked Grace on her own want of generosity, gravely putting it at last to her sense of duty, to go and seat herself by Constance, and assist her. "If you think it right," said he, "what argument can you have against it? Your refusal can be nothing but fear—fear of a room full like this."

"If you had come in a little earlier," said Grace, "you would have had the satisfaction of seeing me employed just as you wish."

"Oh, that I had had that inexpressible gratification!" cried the young gentleman; "but why not now? why discontinue an employment so elegant, and so congenial to the benevolences of a lady's nature?"

Finding Grace made no reply, he added, "It must be fear—fear of the remarks of the gentlemen, not the ladies of the party. I take shame to myself for the share I have in disturbing so much charity and so much goodness."

"No, it is not fear," said Grace.

"Then why do you not sit down again?" asked her questioner.

"I was not sitting down," replied Grace.

"Ah! I see you can split facts as well as hairs," returned the other, alluding to their dinner conversation. "However, why do you not now assist Constance?"

Grace had avoided giving her opinion hitherto, but seemed now compelled to reply, and answered, almost mechanically, "Because it does not seem to me the proper time to do so."

"Oh, then you *do* think her wrong after all," cried Mr. Taylor, with an expression of sly triumph.

"I did not say that," returned Grace, "I only mean that I should not be right to do the same."

"Oh, I see you can split hairs as well as facts," again

remarked he; "I am no logician, only a plain-spoken man. My mind is of that unrefined class, which cannot see that what is improper for one young lady to do, is proper for another."

"That is very specious," said Grace, "but many circumstances must make a difference;—difference of character alone a most important one."

"But Constance wants all characters to be one, that is, her own," said he.

"You are talking to me, and not to Constance," replied Grace, smiling; "I dare say she will explain her opinions to you readily, if you wish it."

"No, no," said he, "I have a due respect for that heap of tracts; besides, when I go to Constance, I put my best foot foremost, and I have no mind to be so very good now. *You* have exhausted me in that line, for the evening."

Grace did not like this allusion to the grave conversation they had had at dinner. Mr. Taylor perceived it, rallied her upon it, and went on in the same strain.

It may be as well also, to give an extract from a letter of Grace's, to her mamma.

".....Yesterday was the dinner-party. I have not been to many, but certainly I do not find them dull, as most people say; I enjoy so much seeing new persons and different persons. There were eighteen at dinner, and some more in the evening. Poor Mary Anne had got into one of her 'scrapes.' I pitied her a good deal, and really did not envy her at all, so I hope, mamma, you will be satisfied that I am growing very prudent;—but it was not a scrape I fancied at all. (Here she gave a slight outline of the affair, and continued)—I think Mr. Taylor was very hard upon poor Mary Anne; he does not seem to enter quickly into people's feelings, for I saw at once that she was very much distressed and annoyed, when he went on

pressing her ; but then I know her very well now, and I think Mr. Taylor, who is so good and kind, though he has known the family so long, may be deceived, like others, by Mary Anne's height and very womanly appearance, and may forget she is as young as she is ; for she is, in mind and character, much younger than she looks, and much younger than Constance. I am very glad I have seen so much of Mary Anne, in our paintings together. We have very nice quiet talks of a morning, and I like her so very much for being so anxious to talk on serious subjects ; I know she wishes to do me good, and I am obliged to her for it. She has a great deal of simplicity, and though she cannot enter into my way of thinking, I believe she understands me rather better than she did. I have often thought lately of your saying that I puzzled people, but whenever I try, to try and be plainer, as I think, I make matters worse and worse ;—it is very odd.”.....“ My most novel talk was with a son of Mr. Taylor's—Mr. William Taylor. He is very clever, and full of odd thoughts—rather too odd sometimes. They wish him to be a clergyman, but he does not like it, and I cannot think he seems serious enough for it ;—indeed, I wondered to see one of a religious family so little serious, or, I should rather say, so light upon all serious subjects. He asked me if I thought him fit for a clergyman, and I was obliged to tell him—no. He asked me in a very off-hand manner, but afterwards went on to talk much more gravely ; so gravely, that I know if the Duffs had heard him at that time, they would have thought he promised very well ; but it did not quite please me, even then, it seemed so much *talk*. Yet I could not help pitying his situation, which it seems very absurd to say, when he has such excellent parents ; but there appears a want of confidence between him and them, quite painful to see. Was it not strange that he should tell a stranger all this ? What I thought almost more

strange was, his going on to discuss and criticise the Duffs and all their doings ; he began partly in jest, but went on seriously ; though he is so intimate, knowing them from childhood, that he calls them by their Christian names. He alluded to Mary Anne's affair, and said things of her and her behaviour I was quite ashamed to hear, because I was obliged to confess to myself that there was truth in what he said. The worst thing he said was, to ask me what sort of religion that could be which made its professors contemptible. I knew what he meant, and was very glad to talk of other things, but he would not leave me alone. After dinner, he again came to me, and pointed out Constance and her rags—as he called her patchwork. He wanted to make me laugh at Constance, but I did not choose to do so, and talked quite gravely, though I could laugh with Constance herself about it. He tried all ways to make me laugh, and almost dared me to join her. All the evening, I had rather have done so than any thing else ; I cannot tell you how I longed to take out my thimble and sit down, and how I wished that I could have felt it right to do so seriously ; yet Constance and I should never agree about the mode of doing such things. She is so little used to needle-work that she makes a much greater show about it than necessary ; she certainly is not a good manager in these respects, and often makes me laugh at her. I suppose you know the Wards are to send for me on Monday ; and as Ellen is to join us at Fulham the next day, I shall not write to her. Perhaps we shall drive into London to meet her, and if so, perhaps I may be able to call on poor Fanny, as she wishes it, except you tell me you do not wish me to do so.....”

This letter contained much more, but the extracts are sufficient, and complete the events of the party already detailed.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

I never nursed a dear gazelle,
To glad me with its soft black eye,
But when it came to know me well,
And love me, it was sure to die !

Moore.

FANNY'S affairs have been too long neglected ; and the reader must now be requested to recall the state of matters in that quarter to his mind.

The day after Grace heard the news at Ringtown, letters were despatched by the Miss Duffs, to Fanny, Emily, and Ellen, containing the history of Mr. Guppy, *alias* Obadiah Boodle, as far as known. It appeared to be a piece of news they delighted to have to spread, and evidently they did not realize Fanny's feeling any especial concern in any part of the news. Constance, indeed, made more than one slight allusion, in rather a mysterious manner, on the mention of his intended marriage with the widow Grange, and insinuated some measures she had in prospect ; but, as will be seen, these had no reference to Fanny. And now, what were Fanny's views and feelings on the subject ? Would she be angry and indignant at the Obadiah Boodle who was about to marry widow Grange ? or would she be absorbed in the memory of Osmond, her deliverer in the walls of Battle Abbey ? The best, indeed the only mode of properly replying to this question is, to transport ourselves to Lady Minette's drawing-room, in Mount-street, and witness Fanny's reception of her sisters' letters, and the events and feelings sub-

sequent thereon. Lady Minette was out, making preparations for a small party, though she rarely ever gave any out of the London season, which had been, in her opinion, now some time past. Fanny was quite alone when the letter was brought to her; she sought first for one from Grace, which she judged would interest her more than any from her sisters; finding none, she had recourse first to Mary Anne's, since she thought Constance's, as probably being what she called "a sermon," would keep. The news was communicated by Mary Anne very concisely. She wrote:—

Thursday.

Dear Fanny,

Grace Leslie has heard such things at Ringtown! we do not like you not to hear immediately. Mr. Guppy is Lady Minette's bad nephew that was, Obadiah Boodle, and he is gone down to Cheltenham to be married to that woman—the widow Grange, the cheesemonger's widow. This was his "important business," that took him away from Hastings! I found it out;—you know I said he was going to be married. I did laugh when I heard it all; but I am not at all angry, though Constance is rather. I think he would have chosen differently; but no doubt money is his excuse,—and a temptation even to converted characters; still I think I had rather be married, without money, than have money without being married (to a person I love, I mean.) But men do not judge like women; they are always bad and selfish—indeed so are women too....."

This extract is sufficient. Fanny did not get near so far—at least, not with any comprehension of the sense; she was only seeking for some more intelligence. Finding none, she tore open Constance's letter, where she found

the substance the same ; nothing farther, but more serious remarks on the evils of the world's influence, and kind excuses for the individual in question. There were also the mysterious hints already alluded to. At first, Fanny had doubted Mary Anne's accuracy, but she could do so no more. Constance's letter was also too circumstantial, to allow of the possibility of a mistake. Constance had detailed the whole of Jessie's affair, and the mode in which Grace had heard the news about their Hastings friend, and, indeed, had Fanny still been able to doubt, the initials on the handkerchief, which she now took out of a small pocket case, and laid before her, were, to her mind, perfect confirmation. She knew also too well the connexion at Ringtown, and remembered the cause which carried Grace there before she had read all Constance's letter, which fully detailed this, as well as the continuation of Jessie's affair. She was in an indescribable excitement and suspense, even in spite of all. Her first angry impulse was against Grace. "Why did she not write, and tell her all as she had heard it? Why let her sisters wound her deeper and deeper, by their rough mode of treating such intelligence?" Next, she was angry with Lady Minette. "Why did she go out just then? *She* perhaps could contradict this news of the nephew." Poor Fanny, in her change of circumstances, forgot how rejoiced she had been to be left alone to her own thoughts, when Lady Minette went out about an hour after breakfast. She first walked about the room, then all over the house, in a restless agitation, which no power of her own seemed equal to controul. At last, Lady Minette came in. Fanny flew to the head of the stairs, and heard her giving orders to the servant about some plovers' eggs, which she had brought home in her basket ; also, sending sundry long messages by him to the cook, and finally annulling them all, by saying she would presently speak to Cook herself. After this, Lady Minette

proceeded to ascend the stairs slowly—more slowly, Fanny thought, than any person ever did before. Fanny had, during this colloquy, about a dozen times retreated into the drawing-room, and as often returned, and now, on Lady Minette turning the corner of the stairs, she once more passed into the room, standing ready to speak. “Oh, dear, Lady Minette!” cried she, “do you know what has become of that nephew of yours—Obadiah Boodle?”

“What has become! what has become! No; what?” asked Lady Minette, getting to a seat.

“Oh, I do not know any thing for certain,” said Fanny; “I want to know what you know.”

“My dear child,” cried the lady, “you frighten me! You look so alarmed and pale, I thought you had heard bad news. Why, Fanny, I am quite pleased, my dear, to see you so interested in my nephews; generally, you care nothing about them. Why, my dear girl,” continued she, recollecting herself, “the last I heard of him, a good-for-nothing fellow, the last was rather good news, if true; but I am afraid it was a fib from beginning to end; ah, he is a sad fellow for that!”

“But, dear Lady Minette, what was it?” asked Fanny, trying to quiet her impatience.

“Oh, my dear,” replied Lady Minette, getting Fanny to help her to unfasten her bonnet and shawl, “why, why, they said, and he said, he was going to marry that rich widow Grange. He has been on and off ever so long, and I gave it up; but a fortnight ago—Oh, my dear girl! you will choke me—a fortnight ago I had a letter from Cheltenham, telling me he was there courting a young beauty, without money; this you know, my dear, would never do, so I wrote immediately, and desired him that moment to break with her, and make up to the widow again. He cannot afford to marry to please himself, you know, my dear; and to lose such a prize too. A million is not

thrown at the feet of every young man ! As I told him, he was ungrateful to providence."

"Oh, Lady Minette !" exclaimed poor Fanny.

"Ah, my dear ! you are young," replied Lady Minette, compassionately, "but when you have seen a little of life, you will understand it is the best thing he could do, and a great relief to me ; he is always coming upon me for money, which, my dear, is all to your disadvantage. She is not beautiful or young certainly, that is, not young to him, for she is turned of fifty ; but if he has the youth, she has the money. All things are equal in this world."

Poor Fanny ! she did not benefit by Lady Minette's moral maxims, she could at that moment feel nothing but a cold death-blow to her early youth's first hope and trust. How could she longer doubt ?

Lady Minette was struck by Fanny's sudden silence and change of manner, and looking in her face, enquired, "But what made you ask me just now?"

Fanny had no power of choosing any line of conduct, or caring what she said or did not say ; she was like a reed shaken by the wind, her course of action and even feeling depended on the mode she was treated at the moment. She had not shed a tear, but she looked unusually flushed and excited ; and on Lady Minette turning to get a better view of her, and kindly exclaiming, "My dear girl !" poor Fanny burst into tears.

"What is all this, my dear child ! you must not give way to such fits—you will quite unhinge me—I am not as strong as I used to be ; here, take my salts."

"Oh, no, thank you," cried Fanny, putting them aside, almost ready to laugh hysterically at the sight of Lady Minette's bottle, whose contents were not famed for being overpowering ; "Read this letter," continued she, giving Mary Anne's letter to her anxious friend.

"Oh, I cannot read ! you know, my dear, the dazzling I suffer from—you read," said the lady.

"No, no, I cannot," cried Fanny energetically,—“ you read those few lines !”

The language of passion can seldom be withstood. Lady Minette really alarmed, managed, with the help of her eyeglass, to gather up the piece of news, and when she had entirely digested it, she said coolly, “So this is all ! that young Guppy, no other than my nephew Ob.....Humph.”

If Fanny had possessed more sense of the absurd, most probably Lady Minette's manner and tone would have brought on an hysterical fit of laughing. As it was, she felt angry at Lady Minette's want of sympathy, and at herself for expecting any thing else. The feeling however stopped her tears.

“Well,” presently continued the lady ; “well, I can't say I'm sorry ; that young fellow had a great deal too much of your thoughts, Fanny, I saw it very clear,—very clear—though I don't always tell my thoughts. The use of an old head—I mean an older head—my dear, is to help the young. You don't know the world, my dear. You must not be taken by every gay jackdaw that comes. Ah, my dear girl, they'll all tell you fast enough fine stories of their love, but its money they want, depend upon it. If he could have got my money and you into the bargain, a sly fellow, it would have done pretty well ; but the widow Grange is a greater prize than both. Well, I only hope he may get her after all. Those rich widows give themselves fine airs. You know what the play-book says,

‘For of evils untold

In this world, there are three,

The sting of a tongue, and the sting of a bee,

And the sting of a widow with gold.’”

Fanny's spirits could in no way chime in with Lady Minette's thoughts and reflections, and she remained silent.

"Come, cheer up, Fanny," continued this lady, in her kindness, "cheer up; only think of your taking such a fancy to my own nephew Ob, whom you would not look at when I wanted you. Ah! you don't remember that! and perhaps you don't know that you might have had him then. Why, I declare, Fanny, it's as good as a play, and quite an example of the old saying,

'She that will not, when she may,
When she will, she shall have nay!'

Well, there are strange things in this world every day. But, my dear, I don't think you will break your heart for an Obadiah! Why, Fanny, that is the use of a little romance and philosophy, to bring them to your aid in a time of need. Ah, my dear girl, in a few years you will know what love and all that silly nonsense is made of! It all does very well for young folks before marriage, but we sober married people know well enough we can't live upon love. You know the song says,

'Not even love can live on flowers.'

No, no; depend upon it, money is the only thing in this world worth thinking of. This world's goods do not last long, it is true," added the lady, in a tone of reflection, "but money is the only one that lasts at all, as the song says,

'Gold alone is worth the sinning,
Gold alone is worth the winning.'

Ah, we are poor weak mortals, but we may as well try to live without food as without money. Yet you know we can live very well without romance, and all those feelings."

Finding Fanny did not at all respond to her sentiments, the good lady tried another strain "Ah, my dear! you

think, I dare say," said she, "that I do not understand your feelings. 'Ah, she is an old woman,' say you—'old, that is, to me, and she does not know what it is to love.' But, my dear, you are wrong there, and now I'll just tell you a story of myself. When I was a silly thing like you, I heard some verses of a young man's, to his mother;—such verses! you know I was of a literary turn, always fond of poetry, and these lines quite captivated me. I always wished to marry a poet, and here was one just to my mind; 'If he writes such verses to his mother,' thought I, 'what will he write to his love!' so I fell in love as fast as ever I could, and I got introduced to my poet. Well, he was romantic too, and very much pleased that a young lady should admire his verses so prodigiously, and be ready to marry him beside; and so we were quite secret lovers, and nobody knew any thing about it but ourselves. After a time he never came, and I began to be as disconsolate as you. I moped about and sat by myself, and looped up my curtain at night to gaze at the moon, and listened to the owls hooting till I fell asleep. So I was pining away, till one day I found the cause of his desertion. Well, what do you think? the poet I had so much admired was a regular toper, and there he sat with a set of low men drinking, instead of coming talking poetry to me. The end was, that in six months he had drank himself to death, and he broke the mother's heart to whom he used to write such beautiful verses. I was not so nice then about people's doings as I am now; but his preferring beer to me, for it was beer he drank, cured me of love and poetry for ever, and was the beginning of my seeing the world as it really is. So now, my dear girl, put all these things together, and don't go on moping as if there was nothing but misery for you."

After a time Fanny rallied a little, more from her feelings being somewhat on the stretch, and from having

thought of a mode of comfort, than from any she derived from the sympathy of her adopted parent. She resolved to write to Grace, and endeavour to get her to call in Mount-street; she had not much plan, but a talk with Grace seemed the only thing for the present worth living for. She accordingly wrote;

“ Oh, Grace, dear Grace, why did you not write to me? I do feel that unkind; you are not going to desert me like the rest, are you? I am a most unfortunate creature; I never fix my affections on any object, but it withers from my sight and melts away like wax. I should not care if they died, but this living death of the affections is beyond all suffering. It was the same, you know, with Isabella Ward, to whom still my heart turns with the affection of early days.

‘ For the heart that once truly loved never forgets.’

It is a most extraordinary coincidence that the same day her infant is christened, should bring me this unhappy news. She always said that I should be godmother to her eldest child, as well as her bridesmaid, and you see how she has performed her promises! It is also another most extraordinary coincidence, that the very first day I saw him, or rather that I did not see him, for I would not look up, I was reading that beautiful passage for the first time—

‘ ’Twas ever thus from childhood’s hour,
I’ve seen my fondest hopes decay;
I never loved a tree or flower,
But ’twas the first to fade away.’

So it is with him; but how much worse than with Isabella! Yet I do not blame him so much; I know he loves me best, and that is a solace to my heart that I would not let the world’s part with. There is only one thing that would

better satisfy me, and that is that he would tell it me himself, though I am quite sure of it without being told. I am sure she is a frightful, ugly, ill-tempered old creature, and that is the greatest of comforts for me ; if there was any chance of her being young or pretty, or clever or agreeable, I do not think I could bear it. Oh, how I pity him ! I know he wants money to pay his debts ; he told me of his large debts, and he has such an honourable heart, he sacrifices himself and his affections ; and he is too diffident to suspect that I care for him at all. Oh, that he knew it ! Oh, Grace, this is my torment ; he is sacrificing himself, and nobody will stop him ; I want to stop him, and I want you to tell me how. I *must* see you ;—you *must* come. If you do not come or write, I must send him a letter, for I cannot live many days in the state I am in. I know you cannot do as you please now, but the Wards are good-natured ;—will they not bring you on Monday ? Lady Minette wishes it very much, for she sees my state is beyond her powers of management. She has a great opinion of you, from what I have told her, and would do any thing for you to ‘make me reasonable,’ as she says. But I know you will think only of your unhappy friend, and will come through fire and water to help me. Write to me, dear Grace ; I cannot sleep, I cannot eat, nor sit still, nor think ; I do not know what will become of me. Pray come on Monday.

Ever yours, F. D.

Friday.

“ If I were not too engrossed with my own troubles, I should feel for your pretty attendant, Jessie. I do think Constance has no feeling ; her letter to me was worse than Mary Anne’s.”

Before Grace received this letter, she had written a few lines to Fanny. She felt it difficult, for the reasons before

mentioned, but as it seemed to her to be a thing right and kind, she sat down and did the best she could. Her note was as follows :—

Thursday.

Dear Fanny,

I did not know that your sisters had written to-day till after their letters were gone ; yet perhaps I should have been afraid to add a line, since it seemed their place to make you acquainted first with news so uncomfortable. We must all think *that*, though we here differ as to the degree. I hardly know, dear Fanny, what you will say to it all, but I fear you will be more troubled than I wish you ever to be. How I wish you could look upon this thing as I do ! but I know you cannot, and I know you must suffer according to the high opinion you had formed. I have been thinking of you a great deal, though I am obliged to think and do a great deal for poor Jessie. I miss mamma so much in every thing ; I want her now more than ever in my life ; she would tell you exactly what to do, and what to think, and make all your troubles seem less. I sometimes think you will write to me, but I had rather see you.

Most affectionately yours, G. L.

In writing this letter, Grace had feelings at every word which held her back. First, she feared she was doing wrong towards Lady Minette and Fanny's family, in assuming that Fanny had any individual concern in the *denouement* concerning Mr. Guppy ; and secondly, she doubted whether Fanny herself would be in a frame to receive sympathy of this order. In all this she wanted her mamma's counsel ; but, as has been said, she did the best she could. She was in some measure relieved, though a good deal shocked, on the receipt of Fanny's letter ; she

read the passages that seemed to her so wrong, over and over again, scarcely believing her senses. "Is it," thought she, "that it *is* wrong, or is it that I understand nothing about affairs of this sort, or that they make such a change in people's feelings. Shall I ever think so! Shall I ever still love a man, who has behaved in such a way! Oh, no, no, quite impossible! I have no one to ask, but I feel sure, quite sure, that Fanny is wrong."

Grace had a great deal to do. She received Fanny's letter on Saturday morning; that day she was trying to make up to Mary Anne for the hinderance of the day before, and hastening to get through the task of painting they had set themselves; but she thought nothing could be more important than answering such a letter as Fanny's, and complying with a request so urged. She would not be alarmed by the difficulties of the task, but wrote as she thought and felt. To do this also seemed the only atonement she could make to Fanny's family, for receiving letters from an individual of it, which she was conscious she could not show the rest with any comfort. She therefore wrote:—

Saturday.

Dear Fanny,

If I could but talk to you how happy it would make me! and, indeed, I hope to do so on Monday or Tuesday; but you know I must be at the disposal of others. At any rate I can write; you must *promise* me in return that you will not write, or take any step in this affair, without telling me first. Indeed, Fanny, if you do, I cannot write to you again, for I know it would not be right for you to act in any way. I think perhaps you will see this, and other things, when you have a little time to reflect, and to recover from the bewilderment you must have been thrown into. I know you will be vexed with me, but you must let me say that I cannot pity any one who has behaved in

such a way, as much as you seem to do. You must observe that he knew Mrs. Grange before he knew you, and that now he is going immediately to be married to her. If he loved you, he had no right to do so ; and if he did not, you have no right to talk as you do. Any way, you see, you ought not to think of him as you do ; and any way, I see, he has acted a very dishonourable and base part. Indeed, dear Fanny, I have not words to express my utter detestation of the miserable meanness of his behaviour ; the thought of it makes all amiability and agreeableness shrink away to nothing, or less than nothing, in my eyes. Now, dear Fanny, I fear I have vexed you, but you must let me say what I think, else I cannot write to you at all. I know I must vex you in some degree by my opinion, because you and I never thought exactly the same of him, and so our disappointment now is not the same in kind or exactly in degree ; but I hope you will still bear with me, and remember that the more angry I am with him, the more I feel for you. Yet Fanny, you must exert yourself, and go on as usual as much as possible, or we shall have you quite ill, and you will have to apply to doctors, which I know is your abhorrence, and I do not think you like Mr. Petty much better than the Hastings one. Now do mind what I say till I see you on Monday or Tuesday, I hope.

Ever affectionately yours, G. L.

If Grace had studied, she could not have written a letter more likely to have an effect upon Fanny than this. It is true Fanny was chafed and agitated at the part that reflected so much upon Mr. Guppy, and she would not have borne the same from any one but Grace. Grace however had been consistent throughout ; and what was a very great point with Fanny, she had always allowed Mr. Guppy's personal attractions, and his pointed, though not public devotion to Fanny herself. Besides this, by the time Fanny

received this letter, which was Saturday evening, she had become so exhausted physically, and so subdued mentally, that she was like a child, ready to be guided and led by the first hand in which she felt the slightest confidence. But it was the last part of Grace's letter which contained the strongest virtue of persuasion. Fanny did feel weak and ill enough to find it very uncomfortable and inconvenient. She had no wish at all to be laid up, when it came to the point, even for Osmond's sake ; and the idea of Mr. Petty, who was Lady Minette's prime counsellor, as well as apothecary, was almost enough to frighten her well at any time. Again, the cool matter-of-fact manner in which Grace regarded Mr. Guppy's conduct, had its effect, especially on a second and third reading. Lastly, if Grace was not sympathetic, who else would be ! Fanny had never yet arrived at ephemeral confidants among her acquaintances, and if she had, she possessed just sense enough of the absurd, or perhaps more properly—sense enough—to perceive, that she would form but a sorry rival in romance to the well known widow Grange, the cheesemonger's relict. It must however be confessed that this idea was first started by Lady Minette. Still Fanny was by no means conscious that her sorrow was taking any new form ; the only change she was aware of—if she observed even that—was, that she partook of Lady Minette's tempting little supper in a manner quite unusual with her, if not unprecedented ; and that after taking a really substantial meal, which she had not done for several days, entirely worn out and wearied, she fell asleep as soon as she laid her head on the pillow, and did not wake the next morning till an unusually late hour.

CHAPTER XXXV.

The day of trial's fixt, nor any fear
Lest day of trial should be put off here ;
Causes but seldom for delay can call,
In courts where forms are few, fees none at all.

Churchill.

THE Monday morning came at last, which was to bring Emily to Winterton, and very highly was Grace's expectation raised. She scarcely knew herself wherefore, or on what side of the question. Whether Emily had it in her power to clear Jessie from the charges concerning the night of the nocturnal noises, or whether she had proof of the actual fate of the coral brooch, or whether all Grace's hopes were mere fancies without any foundation at all, she could not herself decide. Still, the more she considered all the minute circumstances, and Emily's conduct in the affair, the more she believed that there was sure ground for her sanguine thoughts. Emily, it is true, in her letter, dwelt entirely on the evidence of the first charge, and said not a word on the brooch. She did not even answer or notice some queries and remarks which Grace had hastily thrown out, in her letter from Ringtown ; and though this was singular, it rather confirmed Grace than otherwise, in the persuasion that Emily had good news to communicate, but that there was some reason that made it advisable not to speak at that moment. Again and again she went over the same ground.—Perhaps Emily had made some ingenious induction, from the fact of the false dates, and perhaps she was desirous of consulting George, in order to be sure of her

grounds upon this or other points, before she exposed her pleas. The more she considered this possibility, the more probable and satisfactory it became. Grace, also, in her sanguineness, made an act of Emily's,—that of writing to Mary Anne, in reply to the news the latter had sent concerning Mr. Guppy, with not a line to herself, or even a message—another confirmation of her hopes. Emily merely wrote:—"My love to all of you and Grace."

"Ah," thought Grace, "how mischievous and sly Emily felt when she wrote that—'and Grace,' I hope I shall punish her for this piece of impertinence."

Yet, after all, there might be nothing to punish poor Emily for, but Grace's own sanguine views, and all might have to be begun again.

This suspense, however, did not by any means blunt the edge of Grace's keen expectations, and she was glad that very many little parting offices she had undertaken for most of the individuals of the family with whom she had been staying, engaged her sufficiently to keep her from a harassing excitement, which otherwise might have entirely possessed her. One o'clock came in due time. Grace had just finished her last task—transcribing some receipts from a new cookery book into Mrs. Duff's private collection, and was replacing the book—when Charlotte said, "Here is a carriage, very like the Wards', only it is coming the London road, and it has a great package or hamper outside;—how strange it looks, for them!"

"Oh, they would never drive about with such a frightful thing as that," said Mary Anne, going to the window; "they are so particular."

"Except," continued Constance, "it is a basket of fish they have brought from Hastings, for mamma; but it is covered up—one cannot see what it is!"

"Fish, Constance!" exclaimed Mary Anne, "how ridiculous you are; I should have thought it Fanny! Nice

sort of fish it would be at this season, caught on Thursday or Friday, and travelling, this hot weather !”

“ Well, I see it is squarer than a hamper, now they are nearer,” said Constance.

Grace felt almost stunned, as a thought flashed across her mind, and as she caught a glimpse of the package which excited so much interest.

The next moment the carriage stopped at the door, for the gates had been set ready open by Charlotte’s management, as usually, there was much delay in finding the key and admitting a carriage. Charlotte, in fact, was as desirous of her cousin’s visit as Grace.

“ Ellen is with them,” cried Mary Anne, “ that is the reason they came through London. How early she must have set off from Langham !”

“ It is not much more than twenty miles, is it ?” said Grace, coolly, though this circumstance added to her undefined hopes.

“ Why George is there !” exclaimed Mary Anne, “ what can bring him ? He said he was too busy to make morning visits. Besides,” continued she, “ to-day, you know, is the grand christening party at Lord Musgrove’s, and he is to dine there. What can bring him out here to-day ?”

While Mary Anne was wondering and speculating upon George’s unexpected appearance, and while Grace was more than ever excited by it, the party had entered the hall, and Mary Anne ran in, greeting her cousin, with expressions of wonder at seeing him ;—busy as he had represented himself to be.

“ Very true, very true,” said he, “ I am indeed a man over head and ears in business ; but that only proves what a strong inducement I must have to draw me away from the claims of duty.”

“ Nonsense, George,” cried Mary Anne, “ we know you

never care for the claims of duty, or any thing but your own pleasure."

"Then, why, my consistent cousin," said George, "why did you wonder to see me here? surely, duty is with my books in London, and pleasure with my friends at Winterton."

George's ambiguous good-humoured tone silenced Mary Anne, and amused the rest. After a short space Emily entered with Ellen and Grace. The latter had much to hear in a short space concerning her mamma, from whom, it may be remembered, Ellen had only that morning parted.

A little general conversation took place, and the Duffs were beginning to bring on the question of the Wards taking away Grace, when George begged to be heard, for that he had really come on business, and wished every body to attend to him. "I hear, Constance," said he, in a formal tone, "that you have lost your coral brooch; and that you believe Jessie Baines has taken it."

Constance assented.

"And that you further believe the said Jessie to have aided or abetted thieves, or wished, or tried to do so, on the night of Tuesday, June 22d, not as you state, Wednesday, the 23d, of this current year."

Constance, after a discussion on the actual day, which ended in her giving way, agreed.

"And that this belief leads you to suspect the said Jessie Baines of the theft of the brooch, more than any actual proof you have of her having stolen it."

"Perhaps so," said Constance.

"Who else is of the same opinion, and believes Jessie guilty of both, or either charge?"

"I do," said Mary Anne.

"I do not," said the others.

"And who else in the house is of Constance's opinion?" continued George.

North was mentioned certainly, and other servants named. George begged North and all the rest to be summoned, and requested his aunt to be asked if she would hear an important testimony concerning Jessie Baines.

Mrs. Duff sent word she was very busy superintending preserves, that she and North could not be spared together, and that she would be better satisfied to hear it afterwards. George was rather vexed, but was glad to find that North and all the servants and children came in. He questioned North, and gained an admission from her, that if Jessie Baines could be proved innocent of the first charge, it certainly would affect the second in her favour.

"And what would satisfy you as to the story of thieves?" asked George. "Suppose I could prove that one of the servants of the house removed your famous piece of cork by accident, and did not like to tell; or suppose I could prove that an entrance was attempted by a friend of North's, who could produce the piece of cork: would such evidence be sufficient?"

North was much annoyed at the idea of any friend of hers having any thing to do with such a disgraceful occurrence; but worked off her agitation in fidgetting actions, and small apostrophes to those around her, for she had always been a little afraid of 'Master George.'

Constance replied, "that the testimony of a thief himself was never taken."

"No, no, of course," said George; "I mean to satisfy you on the score of character and credibility, I pledge myself for that."

George however, who seemed determined to prepare so as to set the matter entirely at rest, proposed the following note for Constance to write, under the supposition that she was entirely satisfied. After some discussion, and after George had consented to leave a blank instead of the words, a friend of North's," which neither Constance nor North

could permit for a moment, Constance allowed, that supposing she was satisfied, she saw no reason to refuse to write such a note, and it was therefore considered a compact. The note was as follows:—

My dear Mrs. Childe,

Both North and myself, after a deliberate examination, are perfectly satisfied that Jessie had nothing whatever to do with the burglary at Hastings, in June last, as we believed and stated to you. The thief was in fact, who has confessed all, and who entirely exculpates Jessie.

George then changing his tone to one more in accordance with his usual manner, proceeded, "What now would you say to the evidence of the ghost of the unfortunate nephew, or what, if I could produce you a man who had indispensable business to transact in the house at that moment?"

"Well, now, George, say what you have to say, at once," cried Constance; "that is, if you are not playing with us, as I very much suspect."

"Well, then," said George, frankly, "behold—the ghost!—the thieves!—the man, in the person of the witness, George Ward, for it was he and no other who got into the house, and got out of it as well as he could."

There followed this avowal a most expressive pause. A small murmur succeeded, and Grace exclaimed, "Oh, George! what could you do such a thing for?"

"I dared the adventure in the service of the fair Emily, and her friend Grace," said George. "Emily wished Miss Leslie to receive a note quite early in the morning, and asked me to take it; I did not choose to be up so early, and I thought I would carry it over that night, though late. I found all gone to bed. I then did not choose to have my labour in vain, and was resolved to manage to lay the letter

on Mrs. Leslie's drawing-room table. North knows that I was well acquainted with the means of entering the house. I availed myself of the knowledge, and, behold !—the identical cork !”

Here he produced an old cork. “I can also aver,” added he, in his usual playful manner, “that Miss Leslie wears at her toilette a handsome long white robe, and a cap of singular beauty confined by pink ribbon ; I never saw her wear the same on ordinary occasions.”

All these pieces of testimony were conclusive ; there was not a word to be said. All appreciated every word and circumstance ; except perhaps that Campbell was not as well instructed on the latter facts as the rest of the party. George took the cork to North, making her first describe the seal and the marks which she had declared she could swear to. Afterwards he made North fit the piece of wax, which she had so carefully cherished, to his cork, and while so doing, in his good humoured manner got her to confess with a tolerably good grace, that Jessie Baines certainly was innocent of any aiding or abetting in this instance. “And so,” added he, “let us hope for the best, that is, for the same innocence, in the case of the brooch, even though it may never come to light.”

The servants here left the room, and many anxiously spread abroad the news of Jessie's acquittal so far ; while North sought her mistress, and was called upon for her relation of the proceedings.

The drawing-room party continued the discussion of the subject with much animation. Grace longed to hear how Emily had managed it all, for now she began to suspect that Emily was possessed of the whole truth from the first, but she saw that determined young lady was resolved not to say a word to satisfy her at present ; so she could only wonder at Emily's shrewdness, and remind herself of her friend's singular faculty of knowing all about

people and things, as it were by intuition. "It was always so with her," thought she; "when she was a child, she always knew all about every thing, and now to what good purpose she has turned this talent of hers."

Soon after there was a move for luncheon in the dining-room.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

I bring thee here my fortress keys.

Felicia Hemans.

THE whole party went in to luncheon, but not all did the well spread board justice. However some eat, and the others talked, so that all were suitably occupied—the eaters not being inclined to talk, nor the talkers to eat. Emily was in very wild spirits, hearing nothing that was said, making all sorts of mistakes in handing about articles and implements of food, to the great annoyance of her cousins, and to the surprise and amusement of Grace, who now and then rebuked her by a word or a look. But nothing brought Emily to herself, she was in that sort of frame which does not require or demand sympathy; and this, for her, was rather fortunate, as none, for different reasons, could echo her feelings. Even George was a little subdued by the part he had been acting, though he carried it off with a high hand.

"Emily, you are so ridiculous!" cried Mary Anne, "I wish you would behave like other people, and not be so silly."

"Then you must bid other people not be silly," replied Emily, "and then I shall behave like other people."

"It is all because you think Jessie has got off," con-

tinued Mary Anne ; “ but she has not got off—the brooch is not found.”

“ I am not ashamed,” replied Emily, still laughing, “ if it is because Jessie has got off ; I want to prove Jessie as honest as I believe her to be, and one step is gained at any rate.”

“ But, Mary Anne,” said Ellen, “ you do not wish Jessie to be guilty, do you ? Would not you be glad if we found the brooch ?”

“ There, Mary Anne, is a pozer for you !” cried George.

“ Oh, George, you are so ridiculous !” said his cousin.

“ That is no answer to Ellen’s question ; come, answer, Mary Anne, do you wish Jessie to be guilty ?”

“ No, not wish, but I know she is,” replied Mary Anne.

“ No doubt Mary Anne feels like me,” said Constance ; “ I would hope against hope in the case of any one accused of wickedness ; but when an act is too clearly proved, I must acquiesce and bring the offender to justice.”

“ Well, good people,” exclaimed Emily, who was watching the luncheon to an end, and paying very little attention to what was going on ; “ well, good people, I have an amusement for you when you have done luncheon.”

Every body was a little startled, for Emily’s manner raised a doubt in all, whether she might not the next moment produce the lost brooch. Constance however reminded the party that they had not said grace, which it was the custom of the family to do before and after every meal. After this, Emily enquired more gravely, “ Supposing the brooch was found and produced, without any possibility of any collusion on the part of Jessie or her friends, would Jessie be considered entirely cleared of any blame or fault whatsoever ?”

There was a pause.

“ I have not got the brooch,” said Emily ; “ I have not seen it since you left Hastings.”

"Well," exclaimed Constance, candidly, "*if*—I will say *if*—it is found in the way you speak of, I will say Jessie is clear of this sin."

"And you will write and make confession to Mrs. Childe," continued Emily.

"Confession, Emily!" exclaimed her cousin, "what do you mean?"

"Say that you were under a mistake, and mention how and when the brooch was found, and who was in fault."

"Oh, yes," said Constance, "if any body is in fault. I do not see that I need hesitate to promise that."

"In short," continued George, "you will not object to add a postscript to my epistle, something to this effect," and he repeated a few words which he had been writing down.

Constance assented again, conditionally, and Emily proceeded, "Very well then, now, all who wish for a scene, follow me into the hall."

What people expected to see cannot be guessed; if it was after all the coral brooch, as George suggested, "as large as life," they were mistaken; there was nothing there but a large handsome packing-box, which almost all recognized as the one the Duffs left behind at Hastings, with the hampers of groceries, &c. for North to forward by the wagon.

"You don't mean to say the brooch is in that, Emily!" exclaimed Constance.

"Why, as you have looked in every other place," said Emily, drily, "we may as well have a hunt for it here. You know it *may* be here."

"Yes, and it may not!" cried Constance.

"Most true, most sapient judge!" cried George.

"George does not believe it is there!" exclaimed Mary Anne, triumphantly.

"If he does not," said he, "you have another on your

side, and so much the better for you. I think I have done my part for the defendant to-day."

"I do not want George," said Emily, laughing, "you may take him to your side; I have no objection to stand quite alone."

"Oh, Emily!" cried Grace, in a low tone, while the rest were talking and placing themselves round the box, "Oh, Emily, what a bold creature you are!"

"Bold!" exclaimed Emily, with an innocent air, "what do you mean, my dear Grace?"

"Oh, dear Emily," cried Grace, "only suppose it should not be there!"

"Well, what then?" asked Emily, coolly.

"Why you make all of us seem guilty, and poor Jessie ten times worse than ever. It is casting all on one die; only suppose it is not there!"

"And only suppose it is!" replied Emily, counterfeiting very accurately and nicely her friend's inflexions, which were rather of a peculiar cast.

Emily had just before sent Charlotte for the key, and had begged to summon North again for her examination, as George had done for his. Not only North, but all the household again entered and ranged themselves so as to see conveniently what was going on.

As soon as North understood the purport of the search, she vehemently protested that it was of no manner of use. "The brooch cannot be there to my certain knowledge," said she; "before I left Hastings, I helped Miss Charlotte pack the trunk; I locked and strapped it, and with my own two eyes did I see it posited in Pickford's wagon-office. William (the footman of the Wards) has just been telling me how they took it, just now, from Pickford's office, in Wood-street, and I feel sure, Miss Emily, that all your trouble is vain; no one can have tampered with the trunk, and you had best let us servants undo it, as should be."

"Well, North," replied Emily, "you must let me have my way; and you know if the brooch is found, you and Miss Constance will be sure it was your packing up, and if it is not, why you must have a good laugh at me."

"As you please, Miss Emily," said North, with a dignified submission.

"Oh, Emily!" again whispered Grace.

At this moment Charlotte returned with her mother's well-arranged bunch of keys—all the packing keys in the house, a bright cluster of Bramahs—on a bright ring, each having a fair ivory designator appended to its neck. Charlotte held the proper key on her finger, which she knew as well as her mother, who had carefully pointed it out to her.

"Come, Charlotte, you are the packer general," said Emily, "and I dare say you know all about the contents of this box—I want Constance's work-box."

"Oh," cried Constance, apparently with more ease than before, "if you think it is in my work-box, I know you are wrong, for my work-box was not unlocked for a great many days before we left Hastings; and I had my brooch long after I lost my keys."

"Well, we may as well look," said Emily, "and then we shall all be sure."

Meanwhile the quiet Charlotte had kneeled down, unlocked the soft-toned lock, raised the lid, (for George and Campbell had during North's speech unloosed the straps) and begun removing the contents of the box.

Mary Anne and Constance were the only ones that spoke for some time, and their speeches consisted of assertions and exclamations.

Poor Grace was in a far higher state of excitement than if the question had touched herself. Her heart beat violently, and her usual headache began to come on. If she had had time to wish, she would almost have wished the brooch *not* in the box. But indeed it seemed impossible

to her that any thing so fitting, so complete, as the discovery of the brooch at that moment, could take place.

George presently desired Constance to prepare her bunch of keys, and he presided himself over the proper key being hung upon the finger ready for use.

Meanwhile the emptying of the trunk went on ; several small boxes, work-boxes, and children's playthings appeared, but not yet the desired object. Never was a trunk so long being despoiled, though Charlotte with steady skilful hands continued her search uninterruptedly. Emily would not allow any body to help her cousin ;—that was Emily's whim. At last a work-box appeared, which most knew as Constance's, and those who did not were not long kept in ignorance of the fact.

"Now, Constance," cried George, "fork out your key."

"George, how ridiculous you are !" cried Mary Anne, "when you know you do not believe the brooch is there !"

"You forget you assert that I have rattled to your side, my good cousin," said George, "and I do frankly confess I consider Emily's a Quixotic search."

Emily had now closed the packing-box, and bade Constance empty her work-box herself, and lay its contents upon the lid of the former. Constance kneeled down, and began mechanically to obey her cousin. As she viewed the contents of the box, her confidence in her memory returned, and, with measured movements, she spread one by one the articles on the temporary table. Constance's work-box was any thing but that for which it was designed ; here and there might be a ball or reel of cotton, a skein of silk unwound, and a few uncovered winders ; besides these, a case without needles, pincushion without pins, and little cases and boxes of various styles and dimensions, all empty. There was, it is true, a pair of scissors, rusty, but bright, with the points turned up, and a thimble as good as new, only tarnished. Constance was no needlewoman,

that every one knew ; and none expressed surprise at the contents of her box, which, besides the above, consisted of bits of paper, memorandums, old notes, stocks for netting, patterns of knitting begun, three odd baby's shoes and socks, a piece of soft leather, tracts, and religious handbills, some dried flowers—once intended for a herbarium, and sundry other articles of a similar description. At last came a thing which caused a sensation in all, and excited a visible one in some ; a small roll of broad white satin ribbon, well known as of the sort which Constance used for her neck-band. " Oh ! " cried she, in an explanatory tone, as she unrolled it, and showed it was new, " it is only the piece I cut my neck-ribbons from."

Very soon after this, the body of the box was cleared, and Constance exclaimed, " Well, I hope now you are satisfied, Emily ! "

" Never so little so in my life, Constance," said Emily ; " I have left you to yourself, but I did not want that part of the box searched ; all I care for, is the left-hand partition, at the back."

" What nonsense, Emily ! " cried Constance, a little moved at her cousin's oracular tone. " How can you tell what is in my work-box, which has been locked up since many days before the brooch was lost ? "

Emily said nothing, and Constance proceeded to toss the small articles from one of the partitions, while the general interest increased. However no brooch was there, and this time both Mary Anne and Constance exclaimed, as considering the search over.

" I did not disturb you, Constance," said Emily, " but I consider the other side the left hand."

The cousins laughed, and George joined in, with a shrug, and an ostentatious smile, as though against his sister, while Constance, with a more confident air than she had hitherto allowed herself to fall into, began pulling out the

contents of the little nest, and throwing them aside. She was meanwhile looking around, laughing and talking. The eyes of the rest however were not attracted from the last hope ; when, all in a moment, out flew a piece of white satin ribbon, which the jerk unrolled, and the other end of the said white ribbon sprung to the opposite side of the trunk, where it gently lighted, with a sound betokening some hard substance. The next moment all lay at rest, and every eye beheld and recognized the tiny innocent-looking lost coral brooch.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

The key is here.

Opera of Blue Beard.

"Now, Emily !" cried Grace, the moment she found herself alone with Emily and Ellen on their way to Fulham, "now, Emily, you shall tell all about this business. How could you tell the lost brooch was in Constance's own work-box ?"

"I confess, Grace," replied Emily, in the highest spirits, "you deserve to hear every word, and you shall ; you have behaved uncommonly well, and have been as patient as the most apathetic creature on the face of the earth. But I have a great deal to tell you first, so please to prepare a little more patience : and first about Fanny."

"Oh, Emily," said Grace, "I am so sorry about Fanny ; I think she will expect to see me to-day ; I wish you could have gone through London."

"I am going to prove to you, Grace," said Emily, "that the giddy and the inconsiderate have as much thought as

the grave and the wise. I could not reply in full to you before the Duffs, who take fire at every word, and who always manage by some manœuvre to thwart every body's plans, and sometimes their own over and above. Then listen :—We could not go through London, because we are going by Ringtown, to call at Mrs. Childe's door and leave the result of our morning's meeting ; and we need not regret your not visiting Fanny to-day, for Ellen and I spent an hour with her this morning, in order to tell her that you could not come to-day, but that we meant to bring you to-morrow. Now you know if I had told all this just now in public, Constance would some how or other have slipped out of her promise of writing to Mrs. Childe, and we should have had her and Mary Anne to-morrow in Mount-street to meet us, and that is just what poor Fanny is in dread of. I thought every thing over, and planned the whole, and am rather satisfied with my success."

"Well, I really think you have reason to be, Emily," said Grace, "for you certainly have been a wonderful creature. How could you—at a distance from the scene of action too—how could you divine that the brooch was shut up in that box all the time, and even that Constance put it there herself?"

"That I consider my triumph," said Emily ; "I was not satisfied till I made Constance confess in so many words, that now she saw the brooch she remembered all about it ; that no one had any hand in it but herself ; that she put the brooch into her work-box herself, and locked it up herself, and that North herself packed, locked, strapped, and at length booked the trunk at Pickford's wagon-office. I felt my triumph thus completely and neatly achieved."

"But, Emily, you reminded Constance of all the circumstances," said Ellen, "just as if you had been in the

room. I saw she hardly believed the brooch was actually there, though she had it in her hand till....."

"May rather Mary Anne believed some trickery of George's or mine, and Constance was trying to be of her mind," added Emily, interrupting.

"Well, perhaps so," continued Ellen, "till you asked her if her dressing-case and work-box had not changed sides on her table that day. Then I saw she began to have a dawning remembrance, and you brought the whole to her mind by asking if she did not lock up the box, after putting in the brooch."

"I knew she never locked up her dressing-case on ordinary occasions," said Emily, "and I guessed that question would just settle the whole affair, and you see it did."

"But, Emily," cried Grace, laughing, "how *could* you know all these things? and how could you know all that about North's days of cleaning the rooms, and that North put the cleaning off from the Monday to Wednesday, on account of Fanny's illness? I knew none of these things, though I lived in the house, and was up with Fanny all the time."

"Yet you know, Grace," said Ellen, "you said immediately that you remembered North making lamentation on the Tuesday, that Fanny's hesitation about requiring her (North's) services in nursing had lost another day's cleaning."

"And I admired Grace's delicate version of North's sentiments," continued Emily, laughing, "for I know well enough what old nurse Crosspatch said."

"It certainly was complete," said Ellen, laughing; "Constance turning upon North and putting the whole blame of the thing upon her,—'It was all that stupid th changing the place of the boxes.'"

That, Ellen, is the highest compliment that could be to my scheme," cried Emily; "I undertook to make

Constance do this, that is, I undertook to make Constance charge North with the fault. George laughed at me a great deal, and would not believe I could effect it ; indeed what Mary Anne said was quite true, for George thought my whole proceedings would be a failure. You know George, like many clever people, never can believe a thing is well planned or can succeed, if he has no hand in it. He wanted to hear all my proofs and schemes, but I would not tell him one word ; first, because I knew, though he is to be a lawyer, he would be impatient at all my small pieces of evidence ; and secondly, he deserved some punishment for his nocturnal expedition, and for bringing down upon poor Jessie such a persecution."

" Oh, Emily, how much you have to tell," cried Grace, " I really do wish to hear all about it."

" Well, then, prepare for a very long story," said Emily, making her sister Ellen change sides with her ; " give me plenty of room, for you know I can never tell a story in straitened circumstances."

All being arranged to her satisfaction, she began, " Now then, please to transport yourselves to Hastings ; and Grace, remember that you know my proceedings by my letter, as far as my first colloquy with Hanson, though I did not choose to let you into much even of that."

" You abominable crafty creature, Emily !" cried Grace ; " I felt sure all the time you were keeping me in the dark."

" Well, I confess I gave you credit for just brightness enough to suspect that," returned Emily ; " and your forbearance in not writing again, and your confidence to-day in my management—in *the main*, Grace, for you allowed yourself some impertinent doubts—were not lost upon me. Well, but my story :—In my first talk with Hanson, I told her at once what I suspected."

" And what was that ?" asked Grace.

" Why I thought—I was almost quite sure—that George

was North's thief and your ghost on the famous night before Midsummer-eve."

"How could you guess such a thing, Emily!" exclaimed Ellen; "you had no more grounds to build upon than I had."

"I did not think of it the very first moment of the incident," replied her sister; "it first just passed through my head when we were once all talking over the events of the night, the second day afterwards. Do you remember when Fanny said, 'Why do you make that odd face, George?' I had seen George's face—I know his expression of countenance very well, and it struck me that there was more in his look than merely rallying Fanny. Then presently he made a little blunder, which perhaps you did not notice; he said very likely the thief got a sight of Grace in her '*snowy white dressing robe*;' he caught himself up, and added, 'on which Mary Anne has been so eloquent.' Now Mary Anne had never said that Grace's dressing gown was white. Having this idea in my head, I always watched George's words whenever the subject was mentioned; I found they were very guarded, and he was always quite at his ease, still he never said any thing inconsistent with my supposition. But I have not told you, I remembered, Ellen, that night after Campbell had been with us, and all had left, that George showed an intention of taking the note over that night. Do you not recollect he talked of the bore of early rising, and said he would try if any body was still up over the way? and when we said it was too late, he said he could but try; then we said 'good night,' and went up-stairs."

"To be sure, I remember well enough, now you remind me," said Ellen, "and it seems so clear and natural, I wonder I never thought of it; but I never fancied his doing more than ringing at the bell and waiting a few minutes."

"Nor did I till this notion possessed me," said Emily.

"But why did you not mention it?" asked Ellen; "particularly after the Duffs took up that suspicion of Jessie."

"At first my impression was very slight," replied Emily, "it hardly seemed fit to think seriously about it then, as George said nothing himself; I thought if it was so, perhaps it was wise, for that the Duffs make such a hubbub about every thing, that I could not guess how they would take this. Then, you know, came Fanny's illness and adventures to put every thing out of our heads; and when the Duffs got up their suspicion of Jessie, George at the first was absent with Frank Freeman. I thought however I would speak to George when he came back, but you may remember, Grace, that your mamma advised us not to make a talk about what had been said of Jessie; and almost before his return, the matter quite died away among the Duffs, or perhaps Mr. Guppy came upon the stage and occupied public attention. Besides this, we know now that Constance and North together commanded silence. After this in fact, I really quite lost the idea till your letter, Grace, and then you may guess the fume I was in! I could do nothing at Hastings away from George; a letter could not reach him, to be answered; besides I preferred speaking to him to writing, for you know he sometimes gets obstinate—like most men—and it required perhaps delicate management to convince him of the importance of our proceedings to Jessie. A letter would hardly answer my purpose; I could not see him till Saturday night, and this was Thursday morning; was it not cruel? I never felt my hands so tied in my life, and I could not even tell Grace my difficulties."

"I see, Emily," said Grace, "how impossible it was for you to do otherwise towards me; but what a crafty crea-

ture you were, to say so much and yet not give me an idea of any thing."

"Why I do rather pique myself there," replied Emily, "for there are thicker heads in the world than yours, and I dare say you examined my letter with some degree of sharpness."

"Indeed, I did," said Grace, laughing, "and I thought, certainly, it contained the stupidest piece of argument I ever knew you guilty of. Its extreme deficiency of point made me at once angry, amused, and satisfied; but I hoped some day to have my revenge, and I am sure I have now;—but do go on."

"Well, I told Hanson my suspicions; and she was wonderfully struck. She said that North was very mysterious and uneasy about a certain entrance, at the window in the pantry;—that North had never conveyed her meaning further than by hints and nods, but that her own (Hanson's) impression was, that there was some ground for believing that the house had been attempted, or entered;—that North had more than once spoken about a cork, which, before this, used to lie in a groove, at the bottom of the sliding window. This cork made the wooden pole long enough for a tolerable degree of safety, so that the window could not be shoved back. It was an extempore sort of fastening; I knew it well—for during the endless discussions on the store-room, I made my way down stairs, and pointed out this rather ingenious device to George, who, with additional ingenuity, showed me how any one who was acquainted with this fastening, might enter the house. 'See,' said he, 'the cork is longish, and being elastic, I can, by a sufficiently strong effort, compress it enough to admit the point of a penknife, and hook up the cork; then I can insert my hand at the other end, and raise the stick.' He did this in half a minute, and called to North, who was by, warning her to beware of thieves as

clever as he was, for that, with all her care, the store-room was not secured from thieves."

"North laid much stress upon this talk with George," remarked Grace, "and also upon the cork."

"I flatter myself," replied Emily, "that the sight of the cork was as unanswerable an argument to North, as my question on the change of sides of the boxes was to Constance; I knew the cork settled the matter. It was rather too bad that George's own discovery should be brought against his own party, for North is so stupid, she never would have dreamed of the mode by which thieves could enter, of herself."

"There is certainly a wonderful difference between North and Hanson," observed Ellen.

"Pray do not compare them," said Emily; "I really do think that the Duffs' *gaucherie* of mind is owing to having had that North always before their eyes."

"She showed off so ill to-day, Emily," said Grace, "that you are hard upon her: but really I did pity her; it must be very painful to feel so entirely in the wrong, and to know that every body sees it."

"Then, Grace," observed Ellen, "why did she get so entirely in the wrong?"

"Why you know she really did think Jessie guilty," replied Grace, "and she acted accordingly."

"And I say, Grace," continued Ellen, "she had no right to think Jessie guilty, much less to act upon the belief. But, Emily, I want to know if you had any trouble to persuade George to confess, and take the part he did."

"I first told him the story of the lost brooch, and all the charges against poor Jessie," replied Emily. "He laughed at the first part, but when he heard all, and understood Jessie's troubles, he took it very seriously, and he asked me if I thought it would be of service to Jessie, to clear her from the charge of the 'burglary;' I said yes, and he said

he could do so ; I said I was pretty sure he could, and that was the reason I had done nothing, for I depended on him. He replied, ' Ah, I see you know all ; you always were a 'cute' one, Emily !' and he made a condition with me, that I would tell nobody, but let him manage it all his own way ; I consented, and we made an agreement to meet, as we did this morning. Hanson slept at our house last night ; she had seen Jessie, and spent the day at Ringtown, but I could not give a hint of the good news to her, or to you, this morning, Ellen, because of my promise ; I confess I did not much wish to do so ; I had got the whole thing up with the idea of a scene."

" And I am sure it went off so beautifully," said Ellen, " it was a great pity there were so few spectators."

" The noise of it shall spread far and wide, however," said Emily, " we will take care of that."

" As far, of course, it must," observed Grace, " as the first evil report. But now, dear Emily, for the rest, which is more interesting to me than this part ; how could you guess all about the work-box ?"

" That is a longer story still, and see here we are at Ringtown ; now, Grace, look out for Mrs. Childe's house ; our man knows nothing of this place."

Grace felt confused and ashamed, for though she had been to Mrs. Childe's, she had taken no notice of the way, or the house ; she happily just knew the side of the way, and before betraying her negligence and ignorance, was fortunate enough to recognise the house by a canary in a gilt cage, hanging near an open window, which bird had been her unspeakable annoyance during her former visit of talk and excitement. Guided by this, she soon detected other signs, and by her direction the carriage stopped at the garden-gate.

Grace was deputed by her friends to make the call, and was charged to return as soon as possible. She obeyed,

as far as the curiosity of Mrs. Childe and her daughters would allow, and at length retreated, saying that Constance had promised to let them hear particulars by the next post. She spoke a few words to Jessie, who followed her to the garden-gate. Jessie looked very happy and modest as she courtesied her thanks, in reply to the smiles and congratulations of the young ladies in the carriage. Presently, they had driven off.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

Had we the keys, said Clim of the Clough,
Ryght wel there shoulde we spede,
Then might we come out wel y-nough
When we se time and nede.

Ancient Ballad.

"It would have been a pity," said Emily, as they lost sight of Jessie, "it would have been a pity if she had been hung for Constance's coral brooch."

"Constance did not wish that," observed Ellen; "I fancy she would have been quite satisfied with securing Jessie as an inmate in her new penitentiary."

"Ellen has always a knack of saying the most severe things in the softest manner," remarked Emily; "from a child I never could be quite sure whether she was fox or goose."

"Well," said Ellen, laughing, "I am glad I benefit so far by your uncertainty, for I have no desire to be either."

"And no objection to be a little of each," continued her sister.

Grace presently reminded Emily of her promise of the rest of the relation, and Emily gathering up her thoughts, began, "Well, now you must consider George's part of the

matter decided in my mind. I had nothing more to do with evidence on North's burglary, or Grace's ghost. I had no reason to lament Kitty's matrimonial trip, which, by the bye, I did not know then. Oh," cried she, with an impatient gesture, "I never can tell a plain story of this sort with nothing to help me on. You must go back with me to the moment I sent Hanson across the way. I must tell you what I did, and then I shall be able to get on."

"Well, and what did you do?" asked Grace, her expectation all the more excited by Emily's amusing manner.

"The first thing I did was to sit down," said Emily, "and try to remember all I could about this famous brooch. But, I am such a wild creature, not like Grace, who can puzzle out the most perplexed question, while chatting and laughing with a party of simpletons, nor like Ellen, who can in an instant command her thoughts to any subject, grave or gay, at any moment, or under any circumstances; poor I, alas! the more I thought, the less I could think; my mind went roaming away after Grace, and Jessie, and Constance, and all the *morale* of the affair. I began making pretty endings to the story, and all the while was so beside myself with my want of self-command, that I began to feel quite irritated. So I resolved to be serious, and I sat down, read once more Constance's document, and Jessie's reply very carefully; then I re-read twice over, your letter, Grace, and the shrewd remarks of your new acquaintance, Miss Fuller, till I thought my mind quite imbued with the facts and their bearings."

"Oh," cried Grace, "if I had known, and if I had had more time, I could have saved you so much! I scarcely said any thing."

"Your letter was hasty, Grace, but it was very masterly," said Emily; "there was not a word too much, nor a word too little. Every sentence told. I cannot think

how you contrived to select and write down exactly the things suited to my memory ; and it was so good and thoughtful of you to enclose all the statements, and Constance's letter to Mrs. Childe."

"That was Miss Fuller's thought and doing," said Grace, "I should have scarcely have liked to ask it, I think."

"Well, it was quite right, depend upon it. However your own information and hints were most valuable. Above all that delightful close, 'I cannot help wishing the boxes by wagon were arrived.'"

"I am so glad," exclaimed Grace, "I longed to give you the hint, but thought it such a fancy of mine, that I feared it might be quite silly. From the very first I had thought of those boxes, or, as it turned out, that box ; but the Duffs were so certain about them, that I never mentioned it again to any but you. I told Jessie I should have hope of the brooch being found in a week, but did not tell her my idea."

"Well, your words seized my imagination," said Emily, "and finding my wits wandering again, I shut my eyes, clapped my hands over my ears, and sat like a dummy, trying to remember. I found this did not answer ; I fancied I heard the roaring of the sea louder than ever through my fingers, and I began to laugh at the oddity of my own appearance ; so up I jumped and shut the shutters quite close, then I drew the curtains, and was entirely in the dark. This was what I wanted, I now found all my memory return. All came back like a dream. Thus : the last time I saw the brooch was, as you said, in the Castle-gardens, on Wednesday evening, the week of Fanny's illness, when George and Frank Freeman were absent. (By the bye what a hurly-burly of a memory Constance has for daily facts of this sort !)—Well, Constance, on my raillery, took off her brooch with the air of a

martyr, rolled it up in its ribbon, and placed both in her tract-basket. Oh, the bright thought! the moment the image of Constance's tract-basket stood before me, the hiding-place of the brooch was disclosed!"

"How was that?" asked Ellen.

"You were at Langham," replied Emily, "but Grace, do you not remember poor Clara's melancholy appearance, standing with one of Constance's tract-baskets on her arm for nearly an hour before you left Hastings?"

"Clara was helping Charlotte," said Grace; "I remember she was locking up Constance's desk when I came in at one time."

"Aye!" cried Emily triumphantly, "locking up! there was my master-piece of memory! the keys! those precious keys!"

"What do you mean, Emily?" asked Ellen, laughing, "this is the third bunch of keys this morning!"

"Well, I will return to my darkness," replied Emily, "and then I shall be more lucid. The moment I pictured Constance's basket in my dark room,—I could not have done it in the light,—the association of that and the last moment I saw the famous brooch, brought a world of new remembrances to my mind. That basket and its contents which Clara was so solicitous about, were lent to her after that very Wednesday evening walk we had in the Castle gardens. You may remember that Clara was with us in the gardens that evening. Constance walked with Clara, had some talk with her, and promised her some tracts, and Clara engaged to come up to Constance's room for them after the walk. She did stop with your party, Grace, as you may remember, and after a time she appeared at tea-time, with a basket full of tracts. Well, when the Duffs were leaving Hastings so suddenly, Clara, who is the most precise little fidget in the world, remembered the tracts and the basket; and in turning the tracts out to count them

over, she found the bunch of keys which Constance had lost for several days. So over went Clara with the loan, and with her prize of keys. Constance, you remember was out, taking leave of her dear friends, and Clara, knowing that she was particular, would not return her property to any but herself; so Clara waited about helping every body as she could, with the basket on her arm, and at last, standing at the hall-door, looking out for Constance, the very picture of patience; the rest you know were placing themselves in and on the coach. When Constance came up, she actually counted over the tracts with Clara, and there was a demur about a missing one, while I stood by, laughing at them both. Clara gave Constance the keys, and told her where they were found; Constance said, 'I cannot think how they got there,' and Clara answered, 'I dare say you slipped them in after you locked your work-box, and you counted them instead of a tract, for I am quite sure there were but eleven.' I happened to give my full attention to all this, for I am always struck with Clara's accuracy, and was amused at her pertinacity about the tract, *versus* the keys. I laughed again at Constance, and told her, she was keeping a world in attendance upon her. She coolly proved that none were waiting for her, for the coach was not ready; and it was very true that the hero of this morning, the large packing-case, was at that moment being handed down, as being more than the coach could conveniently carry.

"All this flashed across my mind in one moment, and you may guess my wild impatience for Clara's return. Just then I heard Hanson come in, and out I flew, resolved to consult her upon my new idea. I forgot I had been in pitch darkness; the sudden light nearly blinded me, and chased away the vivid certainty I had been feeling. However enough remained for hope, and all that Hanson had to say rather confirmed than damped me in my view;

so as I had nothing to do but to wait for the return of the carriage (I could not even answer your letter, Grace), I made Hanson take me with her to the wagon-office, where I ascertained the booking of the packages, that there was but one trunk, and that all would be in London on Saturday. This exactly suited all my plans. I then walked on along the Battle road, for I knew I could do nothing all alone at home. After a time I met the carriage, and amazed them all to find me on the wide world. And now praise my patience: I said not a word to Clara till we were alone and at home, but the instant we were in the hall, I seized her and carried her off to my room; paying not the slightest regard to the exclamations of wonderment and alarm I heard from mamma, on her opening the dining-room door and finding all in utter darkness, with the curtains closed. It made a great commotion by the bye; some thought we were all dead, and some that we had taken French leave."

"Well, and now for Clara's memory and evidence," said Ellen; "I know it will be so clear and to the point."

"Indeed it was," replied her sister; "you know I always say little Clara is the cleverest of our family."

"*Little Clara!*" cried Ellen, laughing; "how would you have approved of that at her age?"

"That is the best of Clara," said Emily, "she is kept back, and not like me at those tender years. Her account was this, and I knew I might trust every word. She said that Constance looked out several tracts, and added to this heap a few from those already in the basket she had in her hand; she then emptied the basket by turning it up, and she placed in it the whole set of tracts. Its contents had been some papers, a pencil, and the white ribbon with the brooch in it. Constance charged Clara to take care of both basket and tracts, and to return them in the same state after she had read the books. Clara proposed taking only the

tracts, but Constance observed she had several baskets for the same purpose, and should not want this one, only she wished to have it again. While this passed, Constance was rolling the ribbon round the coral brooch ; she then raised the lid of her work-box, which stood on the right side of the dressing table, with the key in, which was one of a bunch. After this Constance turned the key, apparently mechanically, and asking Clara a question, went for another tract. All this time Constance had the basket in her hand, and Clara said she felt not the slightest doubt but that the brooch was still in the left hand partition at the back of the work-box, wherever the work-box was. We knew the keys had been in our house from that moment to that of the Duff's departure from Hastings. Ellen was able to bear witness this morning that she heard Constance lament that her work-box was shut up from her so long, and that she refused to have the lock picked, or to have any strange keys tried upon it ; and you, Grace, completed my certainty by telling me that Constance's work-box was packed with the rest in the trunk left behind."

"Then," cried Grace, "you really were not sure of your grounds till you had asked me that question in the hall this morning?"

"No, nor till I knew just before what Ellen could tell me,—those two links completed the chain ; Hanson and Clara both knew that work-boxes were in the trunk, but could not be sure that Constance's was one."

"How strange and happily things occur !" exclaimed Grace ; "I only knew this fact by happening to hear Constance ask Mary Anne for any old thimble, on Friday night, since she said her work-box was not yet arrived."

"Well, certainly I am indebted to good memories and accuracy," said Emily ; "it would all have come out in a day or two, certainly, but not with the *eclat* of this morning's *denouement*."

"Well, Emily," said Grace, "you are certainly a most wonderful creature! Complete and certain as all the evidence appeared, I could never have acted as boldly as you did."

"I can easily believe that, Grace," said Emily; "not if you had the gift of second-sight, and knew all that was coming to pass! It is not your way to carry things with a high hand—dull creature, that you are!"

Grace laughed at her friend's raillery; but at this moment they came within sight of their home, and their thoughts turned upon the pleasure of imparting their news to Clara and the rest. Ellen had besides before her, the meeting and greeting her mother and the others, after her short absence; "And," thought she, amidst all her excitement, "what a different meeting from my last parting!"

CHAPTER XXXIX.

To-day are friends, to-morrow deadly foes.

Hoole's Ariosto.

MANY passages occurred not necessary to be here detailed, before the cousins separated at Winterton, and much comment ensued on the events of the morning. Also, during luncheon, a conversation took place concerning the christening party to which George was going, at his uncle's, in Grosvenor-square. Grace was interested, and anxious to hear more of the circumstances alluded to by her friends. In the evening, her desire was gratified; Emily gave her a full detail of events, of which she was but imperfectly acquainted, and as their conversation related to many matters connected with the present history, it may as well be given at length.

"Ah, poor dear Fanny!" cried Emily, in answer to a remark of Grace's, "I do want to talk to you about her so much, only we have been so engaged with this business of Jessie's that I have hardly had time to think of her."

"You mean to call then to-morrow—do you not?" said Grace.

"Oh, I promised," replied Emily, "and I shall take you with all my heart, which I hardly expected to do; but really we found poor Fanny so low, that I was quite touched; I do think she really loved that good-for-nothing fellow."

"To be sure she did, Emily," cried Grace, surprised; "what do you mean?"

"Why, Grace," said Emily, "you do not know our dear Fanny's heart as we do; she generally makes the most of what feeling is to be found in it; and I confess I was surprised to see her this morning so simple, and so sincerely cut up. We had only one Fannyism, Ellen—the allusion to dear Isabella."

"But Fanny does not pretend to feel these two troubles alike," said Grace; "though I have no doubt your cousin's behaviour was a greater trial to her than you imagine."

"I knew the whole story of their friendship," said Emily, "and I knew what it was made of; Fanny was altogether a simpleton to be taken in."

"You forget she did not understand your cousin as you did," observed Grace; "and it is very hard to see a character as it is exactly, when the person takes a fancy to one."

"Then, Grace, why did you not take to Isabella, as Fanny did?" asked Ellen.

"She did not take a fancy to me when we were young, as she did to Fanny," replied Grace, laughing.

"But she did take a fancy to you, Grace, and a great one."

"Oh, never, Ellen," cried Grace, "when can you mean?"

"Why the very first time you met, when we were all children, and when Fanny got acquainted with her.—I was not present, but I heard all about it."

"I remember when you mean now, Ellen."

"Well, then," replied Ellen, "why did you not like Isabella as Fanny did? And why were *you* able to see characters as they really are?—You were younger than Fanny."

"I happened not to like your cousin's manner, I suppose," replied Grace.

"And why did you 'happen not?'" asked Ellen, with a very slight inflexion of imitation, which would have reminded a stranger she was sister to Emily.

"Really, I hardly know," cried Grace, like a stag at bay; "I was but a child then."

"And though but a child, Grace," said Ellen, "you had an instinctive dislike of any thing false and insincere, any thing contrary to the dignity of truth, and therefore, feeling all not right in this way with Isabella, you never thought of wishing to have any thing to do with her; whereas, poor Fanny was pleased and delighted at being singled out by one she considered of high rank. The acquaintance has been a snare to her all her life, and her character has been moulded accordingly."

"I do not deny that Fanny is weak, and suffers herself to be blinded," said Grace; "but you know we cannot help what is past, and we must hope we may be able to help her to see things and people differently. Do you not think so?"

"Well, Ellen," cried Emily, "I really have more hope of Fanny from our yesterday's visit, than I had before. There was so much more real feeling than I expected; I could not rally her as I had intended."

"Well, I hope so," said Ellen.

"Hope so, but do not think so," continued her sister;

"well, time will show. If any body can rouse her and help her, it is this pertinacious Grace."

"If she means to take Mr. Guppy's defection as she has done Isabella's," observed Ellen, "she will never be any thing but what she is at present."

"I really do not think she can," said Grace, warmly.

"Can!" replied Ellen, "the Duffs can do any thing."

"Of course I cannot know your cousins as well as you do," said Grace; "but in a little time I think that Fanny's feelings will alter about Mr. Guppy."

"Well, that depends upon circumstances," said Ellen; "Fanny still keeps up a sort of regretful affection for Isabella, which seems to me so entirely misplaced, as to be almost absurd."

"I never heard the cause of coolness between them," observed Grace, who, on Fanny's account, was very desirous of hearing the details.

"Cause!" cried Emily, laughing, "Bella never troubles herself much about causes; the cause of breaking was, I suppose, the same as the cause of making friendship—vanity and silly pride."

"But was there no apparent reason, and no difference?" asked Grace.

"None at all," replied Emily. "The tale was thus;—when they were little more than children, Isabella chose to take up Fanny, because her mamma did not quite wish it, and because she thought Fanny would be a creditable hanger-on, and would be for ever writing complimentary verses to her. Then, you know, there came a break *with reason*, Grace; but this made Isabella ten times more bent upon keeping Fanny as her friend than before, and at last her mamma consented, on condition that the acquaintance should not extend beyond Fanny, which was precisely what Isabella wished."

"I wonder Fanny and the rest liked that," observed Grace.

"There are many things in this world, Grace, that you would wonder at," said Emily; "however so it was, and all parties understood the conditions, and kept them pretty well considering, till Isabella began to look cool on Fanny as soon as Lady Minette adopted her."

"She was vexed, I suppose," said Grace, "and afraid that Fanny would not be able to visit her as easily."

"She thought she was nearer than convenient, I rather think," replied Emily, "and she expected to see more of Fanny than she wished; but, besides this, there was the acquaintance of Lady Minette, which could not be escaped if intimacy was kept up with Fanny."

"But I thought, Emily," said Grace, surprised, "that Lady Musgrove was already acquainted with Lady Minette, who met Fanny first in Grosvenor-square."

"My dear Grace," cried Emily, "don't be too innocent; you must know the different degrees of acquaintanceship in London society. Now Lady Minette is but just on the verge of 'good society;' she is just tolerated at parties once a year, and, to do her justice, she keeps her footing from year to year, where many in the same situation disappear and sink into oblivion."

"I thought Lady Minette was a very fashionable woman, moving in the first circles," cried Grace, utterly surprised; "the Duffs always say so."

"The Duffs do not know much of the fashionable world," replied Emily, "and the Duffs are prone to say what they hope; but what I tell you is correct, is it not, Ellen?—and Grace, to-morrow, when you have seen Lady Minette and her ways, you will comprehend better how matters really stand. Lady Minette keeps up her good understanding with a portion of the fashionable world, by her tact and management; she gives a grand party once a year,

and by a certain dexterity in her manner of introducing her visitors, the secret of which I am not mistress of, she keeps herself of importance enough, to be noticed with tolerable decency by her friends for the rest of the season. Thus you see it was highly inconvenient to the Musgroves to run the risk of making an intimate of one, who before was only just admitted into formal visiting, and Isabella thought it the shortest way to see as little of Fanny as possible. Then came Isabella's courtship, and this made her line clearer still. Her friendship with Fanny had been a very romantic one; they had often discoursed on lovers tall and handsome, noble and grand, and had magnificent standards of love and lovers in their minds; but Sir Hector Penny was so poor a representative of any of these lovers, and Isabella's love was so unlike the fair thing that Fanny delighted to picture, that Isabella's first step, which was so imperative on worldly grounds, seemed to be more than ever imperative on more ethereal ones; so after many unsuccessful calls on Fanny's part, and note upon note unanswered, Isabella closed the history of the friendship by her finished management of the eye-glass—an instrument in which she was always famed for excelling."

"Then she quite cut Fanny?" said Grace.

"Yes, and in the dullest most common-place mode in the world," cried Emily. "I am sure I wonder fashionable ladies are not ashamed of such want of originality and dexterity: an eye-glass is certainly the most unrefined implement!"

"Isabella showed a little more skill in her behaviour to us," observed Ellen.

"That was her mother's management," said Emily.

"Oh, Emily," replied Ellen, "I am sure my uncle and aunt had no wish to be rude to us; they are always kind, and always the same."

"I mean that they would not let her go whole lengths with us," continued Emily; "but now she is married, she must do as she pleases."

"But I am sure you would not wish to know her or her husband, if she does not like it," said Grace.

"Oh, not I!" replied Emily; "mamma was a little vexed, but I only lose some pleasure in seeing an absurd pair together."

"And, Grace," said Ellen, "relations and old connexions should keep together as long as possible."

"Indeed I cannot see that," remarked Grace; "I never can see why relations must be intimate friends, merely because they are related, or why youthful acquaintanceships must continue if there is no congeniality of mind afterwards."

"There must be a difference, of course," said Ellen, "but I do not like violent changes."

"No, not on my own side, certainly," observed Grace; "but when people grow up and take lines of their own, surely they must make choices accordingly. It may not be right in them, but I should never blame them for dropping me, under such circumstances; if I must blame, I should blame the line they took."

"That is very correct, Grace," said Ellen, "as regards Isabella, and also her line and ours have been different."

"Her line has been to marry a disagreeable old man, whom no one can like a bit better than she does herself," observed Emily.

"Old! Emily!" exclaimed Ellen, "he is not much above thirty!"

"Oh, I always think disagreeable people old," said Emily; "why, he is just like an old man, has no youthful tastes or sympathies, and is as dry as an old fossil bone."

"He may be all this, Emily," said Ellen, laughing, "yet not be like an old man."

"I knew Ellen would not let that pass!" exclaimed her sister, "but you all know what I mean."

"Well, I am ready to let you say almost any thing severe of Isabella," continued Ellen, "for I am more displeased with her than ever."

"What is it, Ellen?" asked Emily, "I thought you were in an extraordinarily candid humour about her just now."

"Why, she is such a child after all," said Ellen;—"to think of her carelessness with her poor baby! I had no idea till to-day that the consequences were likely to be so serious."

"I know as well how she did it," said Emily, "as if I had been present!"

In an instant Emily twisted her bag and white handkerchief into a very tolerable effigy of a baby in long clothes, and tossing them up and catching them as they fell, she cried out, "*Oh, ma petite mignonne,*" with action and tone, which at once reminded her two auditors of Isabella in her younger days.

"She fancied her infant a doll," continued Emily, "and you know she never could keep her doll's heads on their shoulders two days together; she could not knock off her child's head, but she has injured its poor little brain!"

"Do you mean so, really?" asked Grace, quite shocked; "the infant they are now making such grand rejoicings about! impossible!"

"Impossible, but true, I fear," said Emily. "The incipient Sir Alphonso Adolphus Penny has had the small wits he might have inherited from his parents, compressed to smaller by his mamma's tender cares, so that in sense at least, the generations will become 'fine by degrees, and beautifully less.' Poor little thing, he looks a miserable object, and they try to hide him and his miseries

in lace-quilling, bows, feathers, and splendid entertainments."

"Does your cousin know all about this?" asked Grace.

"What, know she has knocked her poor baby's head! as much as she can know any thing," replied Emily; "she tells every body what an 'escape' she had with the baby before he was a month old, and how she caught him by his long clothes, or he would have been seriously injured, and the doctors talk of great delicacy and susceptibility of brain and spine. Some talk of sea-bathing, and some, I believe, of laying him down flat on his back, till he is of age. If he was a girl I know they would."

"Oh, Emily!" cried Grace, laughing, "you are a sad creature! your sayings have always a double edge."

"Well, I do confess that subject is a sore one with me," replied Emily; "don't you know that at fourteen, Ellen would have been laid down upon her back for three years, but for my impetuosity."

"Well, we are not quite sure that it might not have done her good, and made her stronger than she is," observed Grace, looking affectionately at her friend.

"If Ellen had my spirit she would have my strength," said Emily, "but while you and she, Grace, are what you are, you will never rise much above the strength of sick chicks."

"We have strength enough, Emily, to get through our day's work," said Grace, smiling.

"Don't you, Grace, talk of double-edged sayings!" replied Emily. "Oh, pray do not explain; I can much better bear reproof than explanations, and would not have the edge of your bright wit blunted for the payment of one of your candid faces and imploring tones."

Grace reproved her incorrigible friend by looks of playful displeasure.

CHAPTER XL.

By my troth, niece, thou wilt never get thee a husband, if thou art so shrew of thy tongue.

Shakspeare.

THE next morning, the Wards, true to their engagement, took Grace to make her call on Fanny. They left her in Mount-street, saying they would call in an hour or so, since they knew Fanny was pining for a private interview with her. Grace was a little taken by surprise at this mark of consideration. Having been staying with the Duffs some days, she had become instinctively acquainted with their ways and feelings in outward matters of conduct, and she felt this thoughtfulness as in some way out of place: the next moment she remembered she was now with the Wards. In little more than a minute, however, her thoughts were quite otherwise engaged, for she found herself suddenly ushered into the presence of Lady Minette, and compelled to sustain a conversation of a character entirely new to her. Lady Minette was evidently expecting her young visitor. In appearance, she was very opposite from any thing Grace had imagined; she was very much older, certainly not less than seventy; and the gay style of dress and adornment she affected, rather added to, than diminished the apparent number of her years. Grace had never talked to one of this lady's appearance, and at the first she felt embarrassed under a fear, certainly misplaced, that her looks might be construed into an undue scrutiny of dress and adornments, extraordinary, perhaps startling to

those who had never before met a Lady Minette ; but this feeling subsided in some degree in a short space, and Grace very soon began to see Lady Minette as she actually was, rather than as she existed in imagination. "My dear young lady," said this lady, as Grace advanced into the room, "I take this visit very kind ; I know your influence over my dear Fanny, and I am sure the advice of a young lady of your prudence, will be of inestimable value to her."

Grace acknowledged Lady Minette's good opinion in some way that answered every purpose of a reply.

"You must know the romance and enthusiasm of my dear Fanny's nature, as well as I," continued the lady ; "and I depend on you for pointing out to her how improper it is for a young lady to indulge her grief in the way she does. I tell her that she should have more proper pride, and not think that there is only one man in the world worth thinking of. A strange girl ! to make all this fuss about my nephew Ob, that she would not look at when I wished her ; she might have had him then, though I always thought she might do better, with patience and my introduction, such a fine handsome girl as she is ! You must put these things before her, my dear young lady ; she will attend to them coming from you."

"I shall not be able to talk to her in that way at all," said Grace ; "I am afraid you will be quite disappointed in what I should say."

"Oh, no, no, I shall not," replied Lady Minette ; "I am quite satisfied by all that Fanny has told me of your discretion ; you have been brought up by an excellent mother, and I see you have not the flighty romantic notions of our dear Fanny. Neither you nor she, my sweet girl, can afford to marry for love and all that nonsense ; you know that well, and I only wish you could instil into her your prudence."

"Indeed, Lady Minette," cried Grace, "you quite mistake me and my sentiments; I shall not be able to counsel Fanny as you wish."

"My dear young lady, what can you mean?" exclaimed Lady Minette; "you and I quite agree! I know you do not wish Fanny to think any thing more of this fop of a nephew of mine!"

Grace assented.

"Then I only want you to help to put better notions into her head; I know more than one gentleman, with very pretty properties, she could secure with a very little trouble."

"But I should advise her to take no sort of trouble about such a thing at all," said Grace.

"Well," remarked Lady Minette, "that, as you say, is a plan that sometimes answers very well in the long run, if a young lady has spirit to carry it through; but, in my experience, where one succeeds twenty fail."

"But I do not know what you mean by 'succeeds,'" said Grace.

"Why, my dear, I do not call it always succeeding merely to get a husband; certainly any thing is better than being put on the shelf and left an old maid, as the song says—

'And now I must die an old maid,
Oh dear, how shocking the thought!'"

"But I do not think it at all shocking," said Grace, who seemed inspired into a new frame by Lady Minette's poetical quotation.

"My dear young lady," said Lady Minette, in a conciliatory tone, "I am sure that you do not mean to advise Fanny to wear the willow for my nephew's sake."

"I should never think of giving any advice at all on the

subject," said Grace; "I do not call on Fanny to give her advice exactly."

"But I wish you to do so, my sweet girl," said Lady Minette; "and I can tell you, that if you could but persuade her to take a little trouble about any of the gentlemen I allude to, she would be married before this day three months; and if I saw dear Fanny well provided for, I should be at liberty to supply her place in my heart and house; and I am sure, my sweet girl, your mamma and I would soon agree as to my next adopted daughter. I should look higher for you, I assure you, than for my dear Fanny, though her father can some day give her a pretty little fortune; but she has a wildness and eccentricity which frighten gentlemen, especially those of wealth. There is a solidity and prudence about you, my dear girl, which make you worth your weight in gold; I have now in my eye two or three rich admirers for you."

"But I do not like a rich admirer," said Grace, "much less two or three."

"I suppose, my dear," said Lady Minette, smiling confidently, "you would have no objection to a rich husband?"

"Yes, I should have a most particular objection," said Grace; "I do not like rich men."

Lady Minette scrutinized Grace for a moment, thinking she might detect *badinage* under a very quiet and earnest manner. Seeing no encouragement for supposing its existence, she continued in the same confident tone, "You do not wish for a poor husband, I suppose!"

"I do not wish for either rich or poor," said Grace, "but if I must choose, I should prefer what is generally called a poor man."

"What a man without a penny, my dear!"

"Not quite without a penny," said Grace, unable at last to repress a smile, with which all along she had been battling; "not quite without a penny, he might have a little

money for prudence sake, but I should wish him to live by his wits."

This declaration of Grace's was beyond Lady Minette's comprehension—almost beyond her patience; "Live by his wits, my sweet girl!" exclaimed she, "what can you mean? you would not marry a gambler or blackleg, would you?"

Grace perceived in a moment how wide apart both the real and imaginary worlds of the two speakers were. It seemed hopeless to attempt any explanation, and she felt she had already been silly in following so far Lady Minette's lead. "Oh," cried she, now laughing, "I mean none but a respectable man!"

"Respectable!" exclaimed Lady Minette, in a tone indescribable, and raising her eyes with somewhat of impatience; then calling to her aid her wide experience of young ladies and their whimsicalities, she continued in a different tone, "Respectable! yes, my sweet girl, of course; I was shocked at the idea of a professed gambler; all gentlemen are respectable. I should wish you to make such a match as Miss Ward's; what a fine match that was! and yet she talked away something as you do. I say it is a plan that sometimes answers; some gentlemen, as I have often heard them say, think that ladies should 'not unsought be won', and for this reason you may tell your mamma I am not frightened at the idea of taking you under my protection, as I have had experience of young ladies of all sorts, and find that eccentric ones do well in the end, with an older head to direct them; as the song says—

'In mundane states and politics,
Discretion is a law,
Which rules and guides societies,
As wind directs a straw.'

"I fear you will think me very incorrigible," said Grace,

smiling, though at heart full of comic anger, "when I say I do not wish for that discretion which has no more stability than the wind."

"Oh—oh, my dear girl," said Lady Minette, somewhat doubtful of Grace's meaning, "that is poetry; I am very fond of poetry, and always was. This taste makes me a cheerful companion for young people like Fanny and you, who, I dare say, are as poetical as she is. However, my dear, now go up to dear Fanny, who wished to see you in her room, and be sure to remember all I have said to you; if she would consent to part with some of her whims, I should not despair of her making such a match as Lady Penny's."

"I can only again assure you, I can say nothing of this kind," said Grace; "and really I have heard nothing of Sir Hector Penny that could make me think Miss Ward's a good match."

"And why not, pray, my sweet girl?" asked the elder lady, with some impatience.

"Because he does not seem an agreeable character," said Grace.

"Why I am sure he is a respectable man," returned Lady Minette, without any further effort to conceal her impatience.

Grace was just going to say, "But I do not like respectable men," when she remembered the apparent inconsistency she would be guilty of, and was silent. Meanwhile, Lady Minette continued, "My dear young lady, what does your mamma say when you talk in this way?"

Grace was now tenfold more perplexed for a reply. In the first place, she never had talked in this way, or on this subject, to her mother; and secondly, she felt a consciousness of her mother's frequent remarks on her unusual modes of thinking and feeling, and she could not feel certain that all her present sentiments would meet her mother

approval. Grace hesitated and coloured. Lady Minette took advantage of this tacit admission, and cried, triumphantly, "Ah, my dear girl, mammas are all of the same mind ; I know very well what is the opinion of mammas, and what is the opinion of yours."

Grace ventured a brief, rather ambiguous, assertion of her mother's opinion. Lady Minette would not controvert Grace's position ; she was conscious that she had been deceived in her expectations of Grace, conscious that she was at the moment perplexed about her, and perhaps a little checked by the manner of Grace's last assurance ; she therefore once more proposed Grace's visit up stairs, and shortly after, Grace was escorted to her friend's room.

CHAPTER XLI.

None so deaf as those who will not hear.

Proverb.

FANNY's grief had undergone some mutations. After her improved meal, and sleep on the Saturday night, she had awaked, feeling much more of an every-day being, and much less of a heroine, than became her circumstances. At, and after, the service at the chapel, on the Sunday, she saw and conversed with many of her friends. She found how impossible it was to make the subject nearest her heart the topic of general conversation, or indeed of conversation at all among such casual acquaintances ; and in spite of herself and her expectations, she found herself becoming more and more as usual. Her appetite and her sleep returned,

and it was by an effort that she kept up the show of grief when alone with her benefactress, which that lady lamented. It is true, the next day, on her cousins' visit, she had a burst of genuine feeling ; they were the first persons she had seen, connected with her late trouble, and her consciousness of their knowledge of it, in all its parts, was soothing and affecting. Fanny was so meek and subdued, that Emily was not able to rally her ; neither did she say a word to offend Ellen. They could not stay long, and thus they received Fanny's best feelings in a concentrated form. The evening of that day was Lady Minette's select *soirée*. Fanny met two or three agreeable strangers, and heard much of what had been passing in her absence ; above all, she heard the widow Grange's intended marriage spoken of by a gentleman, who had that very day arrived from Cheltenham, in a way especially calculated to open her eyes to the nature of the confidence she had bestowed with such rashness. At night, she felt more angry with her Osmond than she ever meant to be. The words she had heard dwelt on her imagination, and her heart whispered, "How failing and unsubstantial are that romance and imagination which are not built on truth and goodness"! She felt she had wilfully overrated Mr. Guppy, and that she had neither right nor reason to indulge the grief which the first moment had so sincerely overwhelmed her. She did not, however, feel the whole matter really seriously and religiously ; she did not grieve over her mistakes and errors, and resolve on the morrow to strive to act up to the dawning truths, which were ready to break forth into day, and light her onward steps. As ever before, she allowed herself to be a reed, ready to be shaken on the morrow, by any wind that should spring up. In this frame she received Grace. "Oh, Grace," cried she, "I thought you an age ; I was sure I heard the Wards' carriage drive away, but I knew Lady Minette wanted to prompt you to give me a lecture—now,

tell me, are you not to tease me with that odious Mr. Jackson, of Jack's hall?"

"Grace, pleased and surprised to see her friend in such good spirits, said, "Well, I am not likely to tease you with any body."

"And why not?" asked Fanny.

"Why I should think it the least agreeable idea to you possible."

After a slight pause, Fanny continued, "Yes, because you know I can think of nobody but dear Osmond."

"Oh, no, indeed!" cried Grace, quickly, feeling in somewhat of a strait; "only I am sure if it were my case, I should feel as I say."

"Ah, after all you say in your letters, Grace," said Fanny, "you think just as I do, I see; and I mean to go on loving Osmond, and believing him true at heart, though cruel fate compels him to this desperate act;—I am sure he hates her!"

"Fanny," said Grace, "I will not have you talk before me in this way. How can you justify a man who you say, hates the woman he is going to marry?"

"Why," said Fanny, a little subdued, "he has every reason for hating her;—she is odious, and he loves another."

"And then what sort of a character do you make out the man you choose to say you love?" asked Grace.

Fanny was silent a moment, and then exclaimed, "Oh, but Grace—his debts,—remember his debts! He has a soul of honour, and must pay his debts of honour."

"And therefore must promise to love an odious woman, whom he hates, while he loves another. Do you remember, Fanny, the vow he has to make her? How can a soul of honour make that vow towards one he hates?"

"Well, I do not know that he hates her," said Fanny, "but I know I should hate her if I thought he loved her;

and I am glad to hear she is really the fat, ugly, cross old creature that I thought her."

"Well, Fanny," said Grace, "I cannot at all enter into your feelings; and if she were young and inexperienced I should pity her."

"A frightful rich old creature!" exclaimed Fanny; "Oh, how I wish I had some money! What a privilege to pay off the debts of such a one! Much more, oneself to be able to free the chosen of one's heart! How many squander away the thousands without thought, which would make two lovers happy!"

"Fanny, you ought never to be happy with such a man."

"Oh, Grace, you are so hard!" said Fanny, "you forget the weight of his debts." Presently she added, "Grace, you make me betray what he told me as a great secret—that they amounted to some thousands. What can a man do who has such heavy debts?"

"I really do not know," replied Grace, "they must be a dreadful burden; but still he contracted them with his eyes open. We know he had warnings."

"But that will not pay them now; what would you have him do?" repeated Fanny.

"Certainly not as he has done," said Grace, "though I cannot say what. If he would take up an employment, and be steady, by what I heard at Ringtown, he has friends who are still interested for him."

"To be sure!" cried Fanny, "who would not be? Every creature must be interested in him!"

"Now, Fanny," said Grace, "I must speak a few words seriously to you; all you say, is talk—mere talk, and nothing else. Your feelings would not stand an hour, and they ought not to stand, under certain circumstances."

"You mean if he were actually married," said Fanny.

"I mean also, if you were to see him, and if he behaved cool to you."

"He could not behave cool to me, if he saw me," said Fanny, more moved than she had been hitherto; "I would not let him."

"I hope, Fanny, you would both let him and wish him to behave so," returned her friend, in a kind tone; "he has done wrong; you should let every other thought be absorbed in that. You ought to rejoice to be spared any connexion with such a person, and be thankful to have been as little involved as you have been."

"What do I care for debts? I am not thinking of debts!" cried Fanny, wilfully misinterpreting Grace's word.

"And I am not thinking of debts or money, Fanny," said Grace; "you well know that. Indeed Fanny, you will always be deceived; you will never know people as they really are, if you allow yourself to be blinded in this way."

"But you know, Grace, there can be no poetry or romance, if people always do exactly right," said Fanny, urging an argument which was rather a favourite with her; "the world would get duller and stupider every day, and every body would be alike if every body were good. All the interesting stories one hears in real life which approach to novels, owe their very existence to some one or other doing what is wrong."

"Supposing this is so, Fanny," returned Grace, "it is no excuse for you and me doing wrong; we are not sent into this world for the purpose of making interesting stories."

"Now how like that is to Constance, Grace," said Fanny, "and yet you look so different, that it is as unlike as possible. By the bye, how does your pretty *protégée*, Jessie, go on? I am sure *there* is an interesting story made by the fault of one person! I think Constance grows more severe and unkind every day; she and North had a

spite against the poor girl, ever since she nursed me so nicely. North is an envious spiteful old creature, just like her name, a bitter North wind, and could not bear my preference for the pretty Jessie."

Grace replied to Fanny's enquiry, and the conversation took this turn.

Grace had another interview with Lady Minette before her departure.

CHAPTER XLII.

'Tis well to be merry and wise,
'Tis well to be honest and true,
'Tis well to be off wi' the old luvie,
Before ye are on wi' the new.

Scotch Song.

As soon as the three friends were again seated in the carriage, and on their way home, Emily began questioning Grace on her interview with Lady Minette. After extracting with some dexterity Grace's feelings upon this lady, and after guessing with some skill the topics discussed and sentiments advanced, she rallied Grace upon the candour of her confession concerning Lady Minette, saying, she now thought she was nearer than ever the point she had set her heart upon, concerning certain friends of theirs. "For," added she, with a voice and manner not to be mistaken, "for, my sweet girl, as the song says—

'It is not the specious and grim,
Can long blindfold such creatures as you,
Filled up with themselves to the brim,
Mere shades of the honest and true.'

Youth requires an older head, my dear young lady!"

"Oh, Emily," cried Grace, "I thought you were too old for mimicry!"

"Nobody can be too old for mimicking Lady Minette," said Emily, "whose only respectable quality is her age;—besides I hold it a good moral to do so. I think it will save you and Ellen from ever falling into such an old age."

"We have both seen Lady Minette, Emily," observed Ellen.

"*Voilà* Ellen, with her sharp saws as usual!" cried Emily, "what are my points to hers?—and yet nobody ever dreams of calling Ellen to account!—such are the inconsistencies of the world; as the proverb says, my sweet girls—

'While one horse may revel in meadow and stall,
Another poor wretch dare not peep o'er the wall.'

Well, now and then," continued she, satisfied to amuse her friends, and to silence Grace, "now and then I get a sweet little bit of revenge."

"Grace," said Ellen, "Emily and Lady Minette together at their best, are too good or too bad; I dare say your interview was comical enough."

Grace again frankly confessed her amusement and her inward wrath, and satisfied her friends with a longer account. "But," added she, "really Lady Minette is very clever—so prompt and sharp."

"Her memory for quotation is certainly remarkable," said Ellen; "this is quite the style of cleverness of the last century."

"But so unrefined!" cried Emily; "I can tolerate a good deal in that way, as you know, good people; but I trust I have more heart for mimicking my Lady, than imitating her. And," continued she, half expecting a reproof, yet daring inflexions just sufficient to call the lady in question before her hearers, "and, my dear young la-

dies, I hope you echo the sentiment!—However, Grace, really your remark has made me think of her Ladyship in a more respectful light than ever I did before. But I entreat you, good people, if you have any pity, not to go on talking of her worthy Ladyship, while I have so much important matter to communicate.”

“About what, Emily?” asked Ellen, innocently.

“Why, to be sure, about our well beloved Guppy—our Osmond—our dear Boodle—our Obadiah—Zephaniah—Zedekiah—above all, our highly venerated O. Grange, of Incubus Hall, Moonshire, Esquire.”

“Do you mean he is going to change his name?” asked both listeners, laughing.

“Why, where have you been not to know that?” cried Emily, as pitying their ignorance.

“How do you know, Emily?” said Ellen.

“How! why, as I know a hundred other facts about him, which I have been burning to communicate these two days, but you chatter so, that I have not found one moment to slip in a word.—And now see! here we are at home! Well,” added she, “run up stairs, throw aside your bonnets, get your work, and meet me under the tree on the lawn, and you shall hear what you shall hear!”

“But seriously, Emily,” said Ellen, “can you tell us facts, or is it only your own views?”

“My own views! impertinent child!” cried Emily, “it is facts, real true facts, with valuable notes and comments thereon. So now jump out, and run up stairs.”

In a short time the young friends met, as appointed, on the lawn, and there, with a bright sun gleaming all about, the richest trees in their fullest summer foliage around, and the silver Thames gliding as it were at their very feet, they took their seats, all equally anxious to enter upon details, which were to them of highly exciting interest.

"And do you really mean you know more than we do, Emily?" asked Grace.

"Really and truly I do," replied Emily; "all the facts I tell shall be warranted; and I will afterwards give you up my authority."

"Then of course you heard news at Hastings?" observed Ellen.

"Never mind where I heard news, Mademoiselle," cried Emily, "but listen to my tale.....Obadiah, was the son of one Boodle, and his father's sister married a knight. And Obadiah gave them trouble from his earliest youth, for he followed after worthless companions, and did not speak the truth. And they bound him first to one master, then another, but he slipped away from all, and made a line for himself. But he often wanted money, and then he came to his mother, and to his aunt, the knight's lady, for his father would have nothing to say to him. Now Obadiah was a lad of parts and spirit, and had withal a handsome and comely person, and as he considered his fate his fortune, he lost no opportunity of advancing its interest in all ways. And by hook or by crook, he managed to travel, and study, and learn, and read, till he became quite an accomplished youth to look at; but he had not learned to understand from his favourite poet, Young, though so deeply read therein, that,

'Solid bodies only polish well.'

Here there was a slight interruption, for Emily's tones and manner brought the subject of her history more vividly before her auditors, and carried as it were her meaning more home to them, than any words could have done. It was not a laugh, or even a smile then, that caused the pause, but a sensation, which some, even without Emily's powers, are able to produce on minds previously attuned to their touch.

Emily continued, "Our Obadiah had an aunt, and this aunt had some property ; some whisper that this is much overrated, but nobody knows the truth of that. And this aunt had an adopted daughter, young, beautiful, and with some expectation, besides the great fortune she was to inherit from her adopted mamma. Now it struck this lady that it would not only happily reclaim her nephew, but dispose of two birds with one stone, to cause to be married this interesting pair, so the experiment of a meeting was made. But the young lady was standing in the window, reading *Lalla Rookh*, and no entreaties could prevail on her to raise her eyes from her book, or her thoughts to our poor Obadiah, and the interview was a failure. After this our hero gave freer range to his genius, and took to gaming. His aunt perceived that by now linking his fate with her adopted daughter, she would only increase and perpetuate her disquietudes, and the scheme was entirely given up. Our Obadiah had a brother about as hopeful as himself ; the difference between them being, that the one took to high, the other to low life. The one gamed and betted, the other swindled and forged ; and the latter for the present fared the worst, for he had a narrow escape with his neck, and was smuggled over to America in a hamper of fine old port. He disappeared, and some thought he was drowned. All this time our Obadiah was accustomed to hear the rebukes of an uncle of his mother's, who severely took him to task ; and often it is said, he grieved over his evil life. One day he went to hear some famous preacher, and came back to his uncle declaring he was converted. No one could contradict him, and the tale remains in the family a recorded fact ; but whether converted or not, he followed the same courses, and by pleading constant repentance, he succeeded in drawing more and more deeply for money, upon all his connexions, and even upon his severe great uncle, the Baptist. He now declared that he considered

gaming a religious obligation, as it was the only trade he could follow, and it was his duty to relieve his dear friends as much as possible from the burden of his maintenance. Obadiah is a clever fellow, and can make black seem white. With such pleas, he actually mystified the minds of his mother and sisters, who, in spite of their sufferings in his behalf, and of his wickedness, are proud of his appearance and his talents, and his having at times worked his way into fashionable life. But now came a change. Old Grange, the rich cheesemonger, died, and left his widow sole and entire heiress of all his wealth, and that wealth proved far more than was expected. They said she had a million and a half at her sole disposal ; but Obadiah's ambition was not unreasonable, and if it was half a million he would have been satisfied. He had in his new character visited occasionally religious meetings, but, though he had seen his aunt at these, she paid him no notice, and perhaps piqued with the disregard he had invariably met with in this quarter, he resolved to take his place on the Cheltenham coach and repair his ruined fortunes. I can tell you no more than that in a few days he was the devoted lover, and in a few weeks the accepted suitor of the widow Grange, and that his announcement of this happy event was rejoiced over in secrecy by his own immediate family ; for the sensitive widow would not yet allow publicity to the news. And here comes a blank ; what happened I can only guess ; a quarrel perhaps on the debts or settlements ; perhaps the gentleman valued himself at too high a price, however the lovers parted, and, whether to revive her affection or to soothe his own despair I know not, but he took up a false name, and set off for Hastings, where was the young and romantic beauty, who had once before scorned him."

"Now, Emily," interrupted Ellen, "do you know all this for fact?"

"All the facts are really genuine," replied Emily; "now and then—as now—I give my own interpretation of them, which you may believe or not."

"Then why do you think he took a false name, and so remarkable a one too?" asked Ellen.

"Why that was the very crown of the scheme," replied Emily; "a fine christian name for Fanny's romantic dreams, and a surname which nobody could believe! You know he wished them all to suspect he was not himself, and finely to be sure they took the bait. Then, you know, he went on cautiously, and saw how they all looked upon him—Oh, I see it all now as plain as possible—I wonder you do not!"

"But what could be his motive, Emily?" asked Ellen; "he would only destroy his chance with the widow."

"By no means," replied Emily, "there was the double plan! It rather would help him with a widow Grange; it amused his idleness, it relieved his pique, and if the widow failed him, it was a pretty little reversionary prospect. With dear Fanny's heart on his side, he could easily melt others already devoted to him—and then, what are debts to hearts?"

"But how did you find out all this, Emily?" asked Ellen.

"Why, my dear Ellen," replied her sister, "you yourself told me the most difficult part; that is, the scheme and plan of the Hastings adventure."

"I, Emily!" exclaimed Ellen, "what can you mean?"

"Do you not remember giving me the history of your walk home one Sunday, after you had been discoursing with Constance against going to a dissenting meeting?"

"Yes," replied Ellen, surprised, "but what then?"

"Do you not remember the couple who met and greeted, and walked away together in so friendly a manner?—Yes, I see you do!—Well, some time after, when one day I saw

our Osmond lingering at the cottage door, talking with North, it flashed across my mind that that couple was they, and that he must have some purpose to answer by being so intimate with her. This, his unnatural league with North, put all the rest into my head ;—his deference to Constance, his attention to Mary Anne, his flattery of the whole family, his coolness to us and Grace (at least, in the presence of all but Fanny,) and his homage to us when safe ; the whole crowned by his private devotion to Fanny. When I think it all over, I do think he deserves the reward of the widow, for he really conducted this affair in the most masterly style. Why, you know, he has not committed himself in the smallest particular, and yet one word could have made it all a regular courtship to any individual in the family he chose to select."

"Well, if it is so," said Ellen, "you must remember that every one of the Duffs—I mean all but Campbell and Charlotte—helped him on by their imprudence, or he could never have deceived them."

"Well, perhaps he has not deceived them, except poor Fanny," said Emily, "but time will show that ! *I* believe that Constance will stand up for him as stoutly as she has stood up against Jessie ; why, you know, she *has* done so already."

"Yes," replied Grace, "but then she was always dropping hints of something she meant to do, and I saw she was not entirely satisfied at heart. I think she took his part for the present, as it were ; there always seemed more reserve about her defence of him than Mary Anne's."

"Well, time will show !" repeated Emily, "for I believe something is brewing up in that quarter, and depend upon it, it will be rich, as George says."

"But now, Emily," said Ellen, "since you take upon yourself to elucidate Mr. Guppy's history, pray how do you account for his sudden departure from Hastings?"

“ Why, I confess,” replied her sister, “ I humbly confess, that here I must give you more of my own unconfirmed interpretations than I desired. I have sustained my patience these two days, expecting some happy incident would occur to complete my story fit for my illustrious auditors ; but I have not been so fortunate, and you must be satisfied with what you can get, and trust our hero’s motives in my hands. So, to proceed :—You must know the widow has a companion, a cousin of hers, that is, a second cousin one remove. This Miss Kelly is about thirty, and was selected by the widow for her quiet peaceable disposition, and her unassuming manners. Mrs. Grange had said she wanted one who could be a friend whose sentiments should in all things respond to her own, and she remembered this cousin, whom she immediately took under her protection. Now Miss Kelly was kind to her benefactress, and could be kind also to others for a consideration ; and our Obadiah had early secured her good-will by some really good-natured services, and also by some pretty presents. In short, this part is as common-place as a farce, and as good as a play, as Lady Minette says, and I feel ashamed to have to lay it before you ; however so it was, and so I must relate it. After their quarrel, of which I burn to discover the occasion, Obadiah made a treaty with Miss Kelly, informed her he was going to his ‘ former flame, the beauty,’ and gave her the name and address by which to find him at Hastings, and so he left Cheltenham. Miss Kelly was not treacherous to Obadiah ; she wrote to him to come that moment to Cheltenham, for that now was his time, and her information proved quite correct. Lady Minette had an anonymous letter, telling her that her nephew was flirting with a young lady at Cheltenham, and desiring her to write to him, and renew her threat of discarding him for ever if he broke with the widow Grange, who was nearly worn out with his inconstancy. The

writer went on to desire that the letter might be directed to the post-office, Cheltenham. This letter was then forwarded from Cheltenham, enclosed open in a letter to Mrs. Boodle, telling her her son's assumed name and address, and desiring her to write her commands for his immediate return to Cheltenham, and obedience to his aunt's orders; threatening her with all sorts of mysterious evils, first, if she *did not* by that very post faithfully transmit all to her son at Hastings, and secondly, if she *did* betray any of the information this letter contained. But, as you know, Grace, this good lady was never made for an *intriguante*, and between herself and family little remains behind, I suspect. Well, Mrs. Boodle always does as she is bid, as well as she can, if she is frightened, and she was horribly frightened. She wrote immediately, and added an entreaty that her son would visit her by the way: he actually did so, on the very Saturday, Grace, that you and the Duffs left Hastings; and that visit was the one that made the sensation at Ringtown, which you witnessed on the following Wednesday. However long before that the quarrel was made up between the Cheltenham lovers, and the widow and Obadiah became the happiest of mortals."

"Now, Emily," said her sister, "we have listened patiently to your relation, as if every word were authentic; and I think you are bound to give up your authorities, before you can expect us to believe it."

"Well, I am quite willing," replied Emily.

"You heard all at Hastings, I suppose," said Grace.

"Not a word!" replied the other; "I never heard the name of Guppy mentioned, except by ourselves, all the time after you left."

"Well, you are a wonderful creature for news, I know of old," observed her sister, "and if you give us tolerable satisfaction as to your authority, I will make you the best

possible acknowledgment for your acuteness, by believing your statement."

"Well," cried Emily, gaily, "I am too hardened to care to be called a gossip; so, without any apology, my authority is Hanson."

"Hanson!" exclaimed both the others, "but Hanson is Hastings, after all."

"Did you not hear that Hanson spent Sunday with Jessie?" said Emily, quietly.

"Ringtown!" exclaimed Grace; "then Hanson heard all at Ringtown."

"Well hit!" cried Emily; "and her authority is sure—no less than Mrs. Boodle's own confidential servant. This Sally is a sort of stingless North, or a soft, simple Hanson. She came in on Sunday afternoon, to take a cup of tea with Mrs. Childe's cook, and she imparted to all present the facts, which I confess I have after some consideration strung together, with a heap of others I remember to have heard at different times from the Duffs, Lady Minette, and Fanny, besides some little patches to help out, which from time to time fell from the *incognito* himself."

"But, Emily," said Grace, who was struck with her friend's acuteness, and the consistency of the tale she had made out, "if Mrs. Boodle's servant was enough in the confidence of the family to know all these facts, how came she to disclose them?"

"Oh," cried Emily, "gossip is gossip, and very dear to all our hearts. Besides, all was over then, and the Boodles are not very precise. They will talk over their family troubles to their servants and neighbours, and indeed to any one, and do not care so long as their friends behave as if nothing had happened. Besides, you forget all the rare pieces of news, that Hanson, all fresh from Hastings, had

it in her power to impart, and how hearts and mouths open on such an extraordinary meeting."

Grace smiled at the remembrance of her own feelings towards Miss Fuller.

"Then," continued Emily, "Jessie had the whole news of the week to impart to Hanson on the subject, and I can assure you there was as much judiciousness shown in my rejection of extraneous matter, as in my selection of the more probable. However," continued Emily, "since you choose to be sceptical, I will give you a piece of the scene just as it happened."

Here Emily seated herself in the character of Mrs. Sarah, and making some of the articles of Ellen's drawing-box represent a saucer and spoon, with a creditable dexterity, she poised the former on the tips of the fingers of the left hand, and giving the same an undulating movement, whilst stirring and sipping, she made the following speech;—"Why, look you, talking of trouble, what's thein to my dear missess's, poor lady! She's always in hot water with one or other of 'em;—not but that Mr. Ob's a gem—that is he—that's worth twenty thousand of the other. Mr. Ob, dear young gentleman, is unfortunate—very unfortunate! He has, as missess says, such an unsuspicious heart, that sharpers always lay hands on him, and he, poor thing, takes in all they say, in his innocence. Why, now would you believe it, after all the malicious things the world has been saying of him about this widow, and his wanting her for her fortune, it's no such thing? He told missess and the young ladies so with his own mouth, and they told me, and they told me too all about his running off from Cheltenham in despair, after she would not have him, and how—to forget himself, as we may say—he took another name, and tried to drive his troubles away from him. Ah, Mrs. Edwards! I know you don't believe, and set yourself against my poor young mas-

ter ; but now I can tell you the whole history, for I know surely, all the ins and outs of the courting, and all about the nonnious letters, and my Lady's letters, and Miss Kelly's, and I know I am infallibly possest with the whole tale, from beginning to end."

"Well, I need not go on further, I think," continued Emily, in her natural tone ; you see how it all came out—'natural-like.'"

"And did Hanson give you this scene?" asked Ellen, amused.

"No, no!" replied Emily, "Hanson told me of Mrs. Sarah, and I give a guess at what went on."

"And you really think," asked Grace, "that the case as you have stated it is the true one, motives and all?"

"I, knowing all parties as I do, from acquaintance or hearsay," replied Emily, "do hereby seriously declare that I believe the case to be just as I have told you—neither better nor worse for all parties. But, Grace, you are bound not to take in all my view, because *I* should give a very different story of the Duffs' action and views in the same incidents from you."

"I do not know what view I should give," returned Grace, in a very matter-of-fact tone.

Emily smiled with something of an expression of triumph, but said nothing.

CHAPTER XLIII.

Party entirely distorts the judgment and destroys the taste.

Goldsmith.

"AND now, good people," continued Emily, "after my story—believing it, as you have engaged, to be true, every word of it—what punishment do you award to our hero the *incognito*?"

"Oh," cried Grace, "I do not think about him; he is quite beneath any punishment, but what must follow his heartless and evil doings. I only grieve to think that Fanny does not feel and see things as I do."

"Well, I agree with you in part," replied Emily, "he is too mean for any tragic punishment; but only think of his fair looks and his soft speeches, and I think you will allow that he deserves something, even at *our* hands. Now I confess duelling seems to me the silliest and most unsatisfactory punishment in the world. If it were right, I never could wish to fight a duel, or shoot a man, however much he deserved it; but a sensible, steady, personal chastisement—for instance, a public castigation in the walk, or the pump-room, at Cheltenham—is, I confess, what my heart would rejoice in. I almost long to be a man, and just run down in order to bestow it!"

Emily's manner and action called before Grace's mind, a similar expression of the same friend's feelings in their childish days, while Ellen continued, "Well, I would rather prefer his not being married to the rich widow."

"Oh, Ellen," exclaimed Grace, "how can you wish

such a thing ! That is just the right punishment. I really should be quite disappointed to hear that the match was off."

"Why you know money is all he cares for," said Ellen, "and it is satisfactory that people's punishment should be in keeping with their evil actions or desires."

"Very true," returned Grace ; "yet I never can grudge bad people such a worthless thing as money. Now if there had been a chance of his marrying Fanny after all, how shocking that would be !"

"You puzzle me, between you !" exclaimed Emily, "and I feel the more convinced and satisfied, that my castigation is the best and the only suitable punishment."

"Oh," cried Grace, with her singularly emphatic tones, as she had been reconsidering the subject, "he is a base—heartless—most miserable—worthless creature ! Let him go and live in the wretchedness of wealth ; he is sunk beneath either our blame or our punishment."

"I do not quite like that sentiment, Grace," observed Ellen, quietly ; "we ought not to feel so, I think, to any one calling himself a Christian. The outward actions of such, we ought surely to accustom ourselves to judge by Christian rules."

"Well, I suppose my rule outwardly would come to the same thing," replied Grace, somewhat diffidently, "for Christian rules would make us avoid a covetous person, would they not ?"

"Then," interposed Emily, drily, "of course, Grace, we shall see the Duffs avoid Mr. and Mrs. Grange."

Grace looked, as well as preserved, silence.

"Now tell me, Grace," continued Emily, "what should you expect the Duffs to do ?"

"I expect that they will continue friends with him, if he will let them, and with his wife for his sake, by what I have heard them say ; but I think Constance is quite de-

ceived by a sort of prejudice, just as she was the other way about Jessie."

"And Constance always will be deceived by 'a sort of prejudice,' Grace," said Ellen, calmly, "if she goes on as she does."

"She talks so reasonably," observed Grace, "and has such good religious grounds for all she does, that I do not like to blame her more in absence than in presence."

"And did you blame her in presence about Jessie?" asked Emily.

"I told her where I thought her wrong once or twice," replied Grace; "and considering her belief, I could not find out that she was wrong at all, except in those points."

"And what were they?" enquired Emily.

"I thought she was too hasty in her charge," returned Grace; "and that considering the circumstances of the case, and her mother's, and Campbell's, and I believe her father's opinion, she ought at least to have taken their advice to delay, if not to have given up the matter either altogether, or into the hands of those older and more responsible than herself; but she replied to all by appealing to the difference of her belief and mine."

"And how was, it Grace," asked Ellen, "that Constance acquired this belief on which she dwelt so much, and which she seemed to make an excuse for every thing? She and North both *wished* to believe Jessie guilty, so they *made* themselves believe it. For instance, North found the window had been opened, and that the cork was broken; the next moment the idea, in itself most monstrous under the circumstances, of Jessie having been party to a burglary, comes into her head. Instead of examining closely all about for signs of the mode in which the house had been entered, and the window opened, North forthwith puts by the wax, resolved it shall some day witness against Jessie. Now it struck me—who wished and be-

lieved Jessie innocent, as I read Constance's statement yesterday, in our way to Winterton, that if any body had been *inside* to open the window, why should the sealing-wax of the cork be broken? It directly seemed to me likely that if any one had entered the house—which you know, Grace, I almost quite believed at Hastings—it must have been from the outside. Now, if North had felt as I did, that is, if she had believed Jessie innocent, instead of guilty, or if she had only wished to do so, she would have pursued her examination in quite a different line; and Constance would have done the same in many particulars I could point out in the same way."

"Your remarks about the cork are good and sound," replied Emily, "and would please George amazingly. He told me that every thing he did, putting aside the supper-tray, crockery, &c., was done in such a way as to prove it was done by one *outside*, not *inside* the window. He said he had no sort of intention to keep his entrance secret at first, and therefore he took no pains about replacing the articles he had moved; but that as he heard no remarks from the kitchen, he began to think he might as well hold his tongue, and not risk old North's wrath; besides he began to be ashamed of having disturbed you, Grace, and so he thought he would not volunteer any explanation. He remembered many proofs which made North's supposition, he said, as stupid as it was malignant, and that is saying a great deal."

"If North acted at all with an under-consciousness or suspicion of Jessie's innocence," observed Ellen, "she must be as George says, malignant; but certainly wickedness of all sorts, and even only prejudice is essentially stupid; I only wonder any body can think otherwise, and call wickedness or falsity ever clever."

"Why, Ellen, you go very far!" exclaimed Emily, "what do you say to the sharp Guppy?"

"Yes, sharp, Emily, and shrewd, and acute," replied Ellen, "but still stupid."

"I quite agree with Ellen," said Grace, warmly, "I have often wondered to hear a person so clever as he seemed, and indeed was, make such blunders, and appear so really 'stupid,' as he did on many points connected with motives of action and conduct. He seemed to have but one rule by which to judge all people and all characters; and how little he could enter into Campbell's views, and Frank Freeman's ways of thinking and acting!"

"And Miss Leslie's," cried Emily, laughing, "which, in spite of his gentle deferential manner, I often suspected raised a secret smile. Oh," continued she, "if that is what you call stupid, Ellen, I understand you."

"I mean not only in particulars, but in generals," replied Ellen; "there was a bluntness of perception on all subjects connected with mind and principle, especially religious principle, that constantly grated upon me."

"Then you know the Duffs always agreed with him, and quite echoed his sentiments," observed Emily, with a glance at Grace.

"Yes, I know they did," replied Ellen.

CHAPTER XLIV.

The Lady Constance speaks not from her faith,
But from her need.....

Shakspeare.

THE next day, some little time before dinner, George appeared at home. His sisters had been looking forward to his arrival, as there were many little pieces of news he could

supply ; and the first enquiries he received were upon what took place at Grove House after their departure.

" Indeed," cried George, " it was a thousand pities you ran off in that way, I never saw Constance to such advantage, that is, so perfectly herself."

" Well, I was sorry to leave," said Emily, " for I expected a grand scene, but I really wished poor Jessie to know all was so well over, as soon as possible."

" And I thought it would be easier for you to get the letters written," said Ellen ; while Grace remembered how desirable she had thought it to get out of the way after so uncomfortable an *exposé*.

" Oh, you should all have witnessed the scene of the letters !" exclaimed George, " Certainly, Constance was grand !"

" Well, tell us," cried Emily ; " we can supply manner, &c. &c."

" Well, she got through the letters tolerably, on the whole," said George ; " we had a squabble over every line, but I got my own words pretty correctly transcribed, and I felt satisfied when I had got the letters safe in my pocket ; for Mary Anne has such slippery ways, and Constance is in so ticklish a state of morals, that I could not be sure of what might befall them, in the way of erasures or postscripts, or re-writing, if I had not taken them out of harm's way. So after this, which, though I pass it over, was well worth the seeing, I asked Constance whether she did not think she had made a great goose of herself. She said, no, and that if it came over again, she should do exactly the same. I replied, it was not doing herself justice to say that, for that even fools learn by experience, and that every event offered experience to the wisest of mortals. She said, that she too had gained experience by this event, and that she hoped she was able to profit by every thing. Then I started on a new tack, and said that she, who was such a lover of truth and candour,

could not have any scruple in confessing as a matter of justice, though she could not say she was mistaken, that Jessie was raised in her opinion, and not the unprincipled girl she had taken her for. She replied, not a bit raised; she thought of Jessie Baines exactly as she had done all along. I said, 'Yes, as at first, but not as when you suspected her of a theft and burglary.' She still averred, 'exactly the same.' This rather provoked me, and I asked what she could mean, and treated her as though she were in jest. She was highly displeased, and rebuked me for treating a serious subject lightly,—giving me a regular preachment on levity; so I got serious, and begged her to explain, when she made a regular sermon, and—as times go—not at all a bad one, beginning at the Creation and Fall of Man, and going on—"

"Oh, George!" interrupted Ellen, a little distressed.

"Indeed, Ellen, I am quite serious," said her brother; while Emily remarked, "Oh, yes, quite true; you do not know Constance as well as I do, Ellen."

"Well, I assure you for a moment I was startled," continued George, "and I thought perhaps Constance was highly excited by all that had passed, and forgot what was going on around; but presently, I saw she was never more entirely herself, for I found she was about to prove that if a person was unspiritual, it did not matter whether he were a murderer, or a thief, or simply unspiritual, for that all were in the same condition; and that if *she* thought, much more pronounced, a person unspiritual, he or she *was* unspiritual; and that further, she did pronounce Jessie Baines unspiritual; therefore Jessie Baines was so, and it was impossible for her to injure Jessie by any thing of any kind she could say against her; therefore, she had not injured the said Jessie, and she did not think better or worse of her than she did before. Q. E. D. It was, I assure you, a very creditable piece of argument, and deeper than many

persons of Constance's principle have head for. It failed, however, to satisfy me, and I asked her what she said to the ninth commandment. She replied, that I talked of what I did not understand, for that we were no longer under the law. I knew well enough what she meant, but as I could not battle with texts, I left the field to her, and soon after took my leave; and ever since I have been charitable enough to believe that she was vexed with what had passed, and took this means, though a strange one, of showing her vexation, and confessing herself wrong."

"No such thing, George," said Emily; "I know Constance very well, and you may believe every word in earnest."

"Well," returned her brother, "while I thought so, I had almost resolved that, except for Campbell's sake, and Charlotte, I would never go to the house again."

"Constance allows herself to be so guided by North," said Grace; "if North were to go away, I do think she might do very differently."

"And pray, by whom else does Constance allow herself to be guided?" asked George.

"You must remember, Grace," observed Ellen, "that Constance is only guided by North as far as she chooses, and she often checks and stops North, and can do so whenever she pleases."

Grace felt the truth of this remark, and remembered an instance, among many others, when North was talking down Martha, on the latter giving evidence.

"We are all guided by others, only as far as we choose," continued Ellen, "for if our will does not exactly consent, (as Constance said hers did not, about deferring proceeding against Jessie at Hastings) the moment we are our own masters, which most likely is some day in some way or other, we make up for it, as Constance has done. When we look upon it from this side, the fault is, the choosing

wrong, or the choosing wrong counsellors—not the advice so much.”

“That is very true, Ellen,” said Emily, “else why are we four who stand here now together, so different? We must form, and be forming, our own characters. But if that is true,” added she, gravely, “how serious it makes every act, and almost every thought of our lives!”

“Indeed, I think it *is* true,” returned Ellen, “but it is what the Duffs will not believe. Constance goes on believing that certain acts and certain people are religious and good, and she will not open her eyes to the errors of the one or the faults of the other; she makes excuses for her friends, and will not see them impartially, and for others she makes no excuses at all. This cannot be the way to find out the truth.”

“Constance looks upon truth as something that can be printed,” said Emily.

“Well, very true; she looks upon the Bible as the fountain of truth,” said Ellen, “but then she rejects separate texts of the Bible, and retains only such as suit her mind and character; and this is a part of the system she upholds altogether. I do not ask for perfect characters under her principles, for that would not be fair perhaps under any, but I only ask her to confess that such an act is right or good, and such an act is wrong or bad, whether it comes from those of her way of thinking or not.”

“But really, Ellen,” said Grace, “I do not think it right to go about judging others in this way.”

“Constance, you know, has no scruples of this sort to hold her back,” said Ellen, smiling.

“Besides,” pursued Emily, “when such examples as Jessie Baines and Guppy come straight before our eyes, surely we may speak!”

“I was not thinking of those certainly when I spoke,” returned Grace.

CHAPTER XLV.

Oh, reader, had you in your mind
Such stores as gentle thought can bring,
Oh, gentle reader, you would find
A tale in every thing.

Wordsworth.

SOON after this the family met at dinner, and George was called upon to give an account of the christening party of the day before, in Grosvenor-square. He said it was all very grand ; that Lady Penny was quite in her glory, and Sir Hector just as usual at a dinner party.

George brought a message to his sisters, from Lady Penny, regretting their not having been able to come, which raised a smile in all present except Grace, who did not understand the position of parties. Emily, however, rapidly explained what she conceived to be the state of things ; how her cousin "Bella" (Lady Penny) had manœuvred to have this party fixed during their absence at Hastings ; how the poor infant's state had caused the constant postponement of the grand christening ; and how Lady Musgrove had insisted on the party at her own house being on the Monday, rather than the Saturday before ; one of her reasons being, the opportunity this would give the Ward family of being present.

George proceeded to give an account of the party.

After dinner, the young heir made his appearance, and his health was drank in due form ; but George declared many of the ladies had tears in their eyes, in looking at the poor infant, who was a pitiable little object, buried in his fur-

belowed cap and trimmings. Many afterwards predicted the poor child would not live, and that perhaps his death would be a blessing. The mamma, however, did not seem to indulge such melancholy thoughts, or even to observe that there was any thing unusual in the appearance of her child.

"I have really no patience with Bella," said Mrs. Ward ; "when she was a child, she was a woman, and now she is a woman, she is a child. Nothing will give her sense."

"Oh," cried Emily, "Bella is always the same ; she never observes or cares for any thing that interferes with her own selfish enjoyment of the moment."

"But it would not do," remarked Ellen, "to have a party, and make every body melancholy with any such reflections."

"The sight of the poor infant could not but make every one melancholy," said George ; "I declare I always before thought a sick child a bore, and wondered how mammas and nurses could make the fuss about them they do ; but now I felt quite angry to see Bella, smiling and bowing, and receiving congratulations on all sides, looking through her glass just as usual, as if the sight she was showing us was the happiest in the world. I did not at all wonder to see ladies with tears in their eyes."

"The fault of course was having a party at all, under such circumstances," said Ellen.

"Oh, Bella could never have done without the party," cried George ; "I am sure she thought more of the party than of the christening, as most people do, I suppose. However, Emily, the party has done us one service of which you will be glad to hear."

"And what is that?"

"I heard," continued George, "that Major O'Brien was to be there in the evening, and I knew he must have only just returned from Cheltenham, and would be fresh with

all the gossip there, so I found him out, and I think I can give you the last volume but one of Guppiana."

"Just what I want, George!—how I wish I had waited till to-morrow!" cried Emily.

"Well, thus it is," continued her brother; "there is a certain Miss Kelly, it seems—a sort of humble friend of the widow's. Major O'Brien asserted that this Miss Kelly had taken a great dislike to the present fortunate youth, and done him great disservice; so much so as to foment disputes, and at length drive him from Cheltenham. The cause of this dismissal was a demur concerning the payment of his debts, which amount to a very large sum, and the settlement the widow proposed not satisfying the ambition of our high-souled friend; so off he went. Miss Kelly continued to do him offices of disservice towards the widow, but somehow or other all turned in his favour. He was certainly the most promising of the lady's suitors personally; and absence and his inconstancy, which no doubt Miss Kelly constantly dwelt on maliciously, seemed to increase his value in the eyes of the fair widow. So at length, by great entreaties, Miss Kelly was prevailed on to act as mediator, and she wrote letters anonymous and un-anonymous to secure his immediate return; threatening him, they say, with betraying his secret to all the Duffs by the following posts, if he did not return, and causing his aunt and mother to threaten him in their way too. This was Major O'Brien's story; but it seems to me that Miss Kelly has been a faithful friend to Guppy, and has perhaps managed also to be equally convenient to her cousin and benefactress. However, whatever were her motives, she planned most ably to get all the letters to our *incognito* by the very same post, and with them, Major O'Brien asserts, a whole heap of demands from creditors; so that our fortunate youth was certainly hard run that morning of the ght general from Hastings."

"Well, certainly," observed Emily, "I cannot think the Duffs' reasons for flight were as good as the Guppy's; I do really pity him a little for his debts. But, George, Major O'Brien's is a lame story, and inconsistent. I can fill my history nicely up with his facts, judiciously arranged."

"Yes, I knew you would say that, Emily," replied her brother; "Major O'Brien was certainly inconsistent, he could not at all account for many things; but I perceived that his information would confirm your view and make a pretty *vaudeville*."

"Well, really, it is almost too common and vulgar for real life," said Ellen; "I feel quite ashamed of them all, and really can scarcely laugh at them as you do."

"Certainly," observed Grace, "one must either laugh or cry, and really I do not know which is right."

"Oh, there can be no harm in laughing at people for wickedness of some sorts, I am sure!" cried Emily; "it is just a fit punishment, and must tell in the world."

"Well, perhaps so," said Ellen, "if the world were in other respects what it should be."

"I cannot think it right to give over laughing at follies," continued Emily.

"Well, I believe I do agree with you, Emily, in the principle," said Ellen; "I know I think the Duffs injure their sense of right and wrong, by destroying in themselves the feeling of the absurd;—what unsuitable, and even wrong things, they think and do, by not allowing themselves to perceive absurdities in their friends!"

"Yet they are not backward in exclaiming against the 'ridiculous' conduct and sayings of many," said George.

"That just increases the defect I mean," replied Ellen.

"You only mean then, that their sense of the absurd is not exercised on right objects," said Grace.

"Yes, and that from denying it its proper food," conti-

nued Ellen, "it is often forced to feed upon that which is most improper and most unnatural. I often shrink from hearing their treatment of the persons and things they are in the habit of constantly ridiculing."

Grace felt she could not contradict Ellen in an experience, which had been so often her own as to make her rejoice at her seclusion in the painting room.

CHAPTER XLVI.

Much yet remains unsung.

Thomson.

GRACE had felt anxious to communicate to Miss Fuller the discovery of the lost brooch, as well as the other particulars connected with the charges against Jessie, and also to thank this enthusiastic ally for her very efficient assistance. But she felt diffident in writing a note, considering all the circumstances of the case; for though Constance was not annoyed at what had taken place, Grace felt a repugnance in entering upon the subject with a stranger;—so opposite were the feelings of these two young ladies. Grace therefore gave up the idea, and felt sorry to think that Miss Fuller perhaps might consider her negligent.

There had been some talk about Jessie's line of conduct. On the Sunday, she had urgently entreated Hanson to allow her to leave Mrs. Childe's, under any circumstances; and now that she was quite cleared, she had written to Hanson, still earnestly desiring to do so. Jessie had what is called a high spirit, in spite of her apparent meekness, and it was

a spirit that, not properly subdued, might have led her into many errors. Hanson was quite aware of her young friend's temper, and now she called at Fulham to speak to Mrs. Ward on the subject. Mrs. Ward rather took Jessie's view of the case, said she should feel the same, and offered Jessie an asylum till she could meet with a situation. But Hanson's opinion became stronger and stronger; "You are very kind, ma'am," said she, "but I think it better for Jessie to remain where she is. The young ladies and every body here will make more of Jessie than is good for such a young girl, if she comes; and if you do not object, I am for her staying with Mrs. Childe, where she may be very comfortable if she pleases."

Mrs. Ward acknowledged Hanson's advice to be good, and allowed the prudent counsellor to do as she pleased. It was settled that the young people would drive over to Ringtown the next day, and that Grace should convey Hanson's decision. This was done; and at Mrs. Childe's Grace again met Miss Fuller, who was the means of bringing the rest of the party into the house.

A very amusing scene took place, as may be imagined, among so many, of different characters, suddenly thrown together rather intimately; their feelings brought out in different ways, perhaps opposite ways, upon subjects of mutual interest. But, however entertaining the scene might be, Emily was not content with the superficial news that Miss Fuller could gather of their late interesting proceedings, in the presence of Mrs. and the Miss Childes. She thought that young lady deserved to hear more particular details, both on account of her general zeal in the cause, and the particular developement of it which she had exhibited, in making up, addressing, and actually pre-paying the postage of, the heavy packet which she had herself been the cause of forwarding from Ringtown. When it is remembered that this was before the happy days of the

penny post, it may fairly be expected that Emily's feeling towards Miss Fuller, will be responded to among some of our readers ; especially among such as can recall the soreness which even a single general-post letter could occasionally cause in some minds.

To return, however, to Emily. With little difficulty, she persuaded her new acquaintance to take a drive with them, and during this favourable opportunity, she imparted to her sympathetic auditor, the whole of the history of the burglary, the lost brooch, and the detection of the respective culprits. In return, she was informed of many pieces of valuable news, to fill up her Guppiana, as George called it. It was impossible not to touch upon this affair, but Grace admired the dexterity and kindness by which Emily avoided the smallest allusion, which should betray the passing interest that Fanny Duff had felt in the scenes at Hastings. Emily did this with an ease that surprised Grace, in one of such liveliness and rapidity of thought and speech. Grace felt more than ever a warm appreciation of the friend of her youth, for she had never seen Emily in a situation which so called forth a variety of her qualities, and proved her so entirely, in feeling, expression, and conduct—a lady. Perhaps a little want of the same delicate qualities, which it pained Grace even to fancy she perceived in their new acquaintance, gave rise to these reflections. These matters, however, and many more, especially some curious facts and illustrations on the history of Obadiah Boodle, his principles, and character from his youth upwards, must be passed entirely over, since our tale has already exceeded its intended limit ; suffice it to say, that by all she heard on this subject, Emily became more than ever satisfied with the correctness of her view of that gentleman's conduct and motives, and that she could have drawn up a statement of his case with full as

much ease and plausibility, as Constance had commanded in her now celebrated document on Jessie's misdemeanors.

One piece of news our young friends learned at Ringtown was, that Fanny was at Winterton. It was supposed she had gone home to finish her month's visit, but the Fulham party thought it much more likely, that the object was a little change of scene and air, by Lady Minette's prescription. About a week after this, Emily was in London, with her mother, and they called in Mount-street, to inquire after Fanny. They found her returned, and the following conversation took place on Emily's joining Ellen and Grace, in the garden at Fulham.

"Well, Grace," cried Emily, arresting her friend and sister, as they were quietly turning a corner, engaged in deep conversation. "Well, Grace, we have seen Fanny, and guess what!—Guess her frame of mind!"

"Why, by your asking, I suppose you mean she has become very angry," replied Grace.

"Angry! furious! and melancholy beside," returned Emily; "she gives up human nature as a bad job, and would go into a convent if there were such things now-a-days. Yet she abhors and abominates her Osmond, and can say nothing bad enough of him."

"Well, I really think," replied Grace, "I had rather she should talk in that way, than as she did the last time I saw her. But what has been the cause of all this?"

"Here is the cause partly," said Emily, producing some letters that she had had in her hand, "and the rest I can tell you, as Fanny did me; only I fear I cannot as vividly represent to you his baseness, and his cruel selfishness, as poor Fanny did in her account—more by her manner than by any thing else. Really, I once or twice re-considered my views about duelling; but still, on soberer thoughts, I hold to the personal castigation."

To explain the immediate causes of this change, it is necessary to return to Winterton, and to carry the narrative as far back as a week or ten days.

CHAPTER XLVII.

And some forgiveness needs the best of friends.

Wordsworth.

It may have been observed that Constance had some line of action in her mind respecting her friend, the *incognito*. The fact was, that latterly, in their Hastings visit, she had been converted over to North's view, namely, that Mr. Guppy's constant visits to their house, had for their object, her sister Mary Anne. She had for some time resisted her mother's inuendoes and North's open belief; but from the moment she saw it right to be convinced, up to the present time, she entertained not the slightest doubt of the fact of his attachment to her sister, Mary Anne; nor was her belief shaken by hearing of his engagement with Mrs. Grange; she did not doubt the truth of this report, but she believed, like Fanny, that his pecuniary embarrassments,—the amount of which he had confided to North—caused him to take this step. She therefore resolved to write to the gentleman, and her letter, which follows, will best explain her schemes and her feelings.

My dear Christian Brother,

You may not perhaps be surprised to receive a letter from me, though you may be surprised at the subject of it; to explain which it is necessary to enter

into some detail. From your acquaintance, nay, intimacy with me, you cannot but have observed the keen observation and penetration with which I am accustomed to survey all around me. The faculty I possess in this respect, amounts to a height which I may truly say causes me pain, far above the greatness of the gift. Alas! if those who envy mental possessions knew what they cost their owner, surely such envy would quickly vanish from the earth! but to my point. This perception confers on me now the power of piercing down into the very depths of your heart, and into your present motives of action. I do not ask, I do not enquire, but as surely as your own conscience, I speak to you the truth. Believe me, I do not blame, I know too well how to sympathize with the weakness of the human will! I know what it must be for those to be tempted with the mammon of unrighteousness, while the spirit of the world is still hovering about ready to return to its place. Therefore I repeat I do not blame. It is a delicate subject I have to touch on, but motives of mere delicacy must give place to higher considerations, and I now proceed without farther preface. I heard the day before yesterday of your engagement to Mrs. Grange, and I know your affections are otherwise disposed of. I know your motives; I know you cannot afford to marry where choice would lead you, but on account of your unfortunate debts, you are tempted to make an alliance foreign to your feelings. I am aware that many pious persons think little of such matches. We know we can point to multitudes of instances in the religious world, where money or rank is accounted quite a sufficient excuse for a marriage in a professor, which, without that motive, would appear altogether unaccountable; but I confess, that however holy and consistent may be the person who forms such a connexion, I must ever account that act an inconsistency with the rest of his life; and for this reason I now apply to you to induce you, nay, to entreat you

to reconsider, before you take this step. Perhaps you are not aware that my dear sister, when of age, has a prospect of some little property of her own, besides the expectations she otherwise may naturally look forward to. But I have no fear as to your getting on, with respectability. Mamma is of a most generous nature, and I am sure she would persuade papa to do every thing that was necessary. Besides, I can assure you that papa is already more pre-possessed in your favour, than in that of any other young man of our acquaintance. It is not therefore your maintenance that causes me an anxious thought, it is your debts ! for these, I feel quite sure, papa would not consent to liquidate. And now you will see that your confidence in our faithful North is not misplaced. On the strictest promise of secrecy, she one day confided to me the amount of your unfortunate debts. £500. is a large sum, but it might be worse, and being no worse, I have every hope that I can propose plans to raise money sufficient for its liquidation. I see therefore no reason whatever that you should not forthwith propose to my dear sister, and on the understanding that in half a year, or a year, as it may be, that your debts are discharged ; I also see no reason that you should not immediately be made happy with the woman of your choice. The following are the measures I propose, and for which I pledge the exertions of myself and my friends. My connexions are extensive, and are increasing every day ; besides no one likes to refuse my application ; all this is greatly in your favour. My scheme you will perceive is fourfold.

1. Sixpenny and shilling cards, among all our friends and friends' friends. This would branch out indefinitely, and I calculate I might with great exertion raise £100., or nearly so.

2. A fancy bazaar in behalf of "A PRIVATE AND MOST INTERESTING AND AFFECTING CASE." I think with a

few judicious hints, that without betraying the names or actual circumstances, I might enlist the kind feelings of many young ladies in the case, and by this means I think I might count upon another £100.

3. Besides these, I would keep constantly in hand in our family, and in others of my friends, a standing basket of the shell and sugar-plum figures, as well as the raisin chimney-sweeps, which have this year so happily taken the taste of the religious public, in behalf of Missionary exertions. This would bring in some little addition to the store, which would be acceptable.

4. But my grand resource is the following:—An advertisement in the new religious newspaper. I have written one, which I shall enclose for your approval, and I would make any reasonable alterations you suggest. You will perceive that in the drawing up and general design, I have united the wisdom of the serpent with the harmlessness of the dove. The study of human nature, which has been my delight from my earliest youth, enables me especially to understand the feelings of the wealthy pious, and I cannot but think that *my* appeal will take where so many fail. I am glad to try the experiment, for I always think it a mistake to address such applications avowedly “TO THE AFFLUENT,” or “HUMANE.” When people perceive it is an application for money, they pass over the advertisement at once; such is often the selfishness even of professing Christians! But if the feelings can be interested, and the weaknesses of the human heart, even in a renewed state, so skillfully touched as to be enlisted in a good cause, a successful result will be the consequence; and I confidently expect such will be the case here. You must understand that any thing I do will be strictly *confidential*. No one now but your favourite, our excellent North, has any idea of my present letter and proposal; I was compelled to ask her advice and opinion before I could take any steps. Our

and North has already proved himself more extraordinary, both in a moral and intellectual sense than ever — ”

Conscience here went in to plead its large the circumstances of the war which, which need not here be repeated. At last she moved her letter with the following clause :— “ I have dwelt so long in this unhappy subject, that I have not time to reconsider the arrangement, which I must now put as it stands. We have one of those fair showers, a dinner party. I would gladly dissent myself, but there are some persons well disposed towards the truth, in whom my instructions are essential. I leave the arrival of the last guests, and therefore can add no more.”

A copy of Conscience's proposed advertisement should here be given.

TO THE TRULY SPIRITUALLY MINDED.

The following appeal is made in behalf of a young man of noble and pious, under the most extraordinary and peculiar circumstances. His connections are in high life, and some of them well able to assist him in his present emergency, and owing to his being a devoted Christian, they do not refuse him aid, but are utterly set at naught in every way that worldly riches can devise. His career has been one in which most of those to whom this appeal is respectfully addressed are personally acquainted, is that to which their own experiences will be able most readily to respond, and therefore it is to the truly spiritually minded alone to whom this application is made. This young man for many years led a life of idleness, and of the most depraved wickedness; but about twelve months since, in hearing a sermon of the Rev. David McQueen's, he was happily converted, and has since maintained a conversation of the most decided piety: in the uniformity of which, the writer of this little sketch will most willingly

testify. The subject of this appeal is now in the most urgent need of the small sum of £300. in order to enable him to walk in a path of consistency. The case is such an unusual one, that it requires being fully known to be at all understood or believed; but any one christianly disposed to assist towards making *at least* one heart sing for joy, may be assured that the very smallest contribution will be most thankfully received. The circumstances of this most singular and affecting—nay, even romantic—case, are of too delicate a nature to be made universally public, but to any who willingly minister liberally of their worldly substance to the necessities of this unfortunate young man, all the facts of the case shall be unreservedly made known, upon application, post paid, to C. D., at the office of this paper.

In the course of a few days Constance received an answer to her communication. It came enclosed in a packet, which, when opened, was found to contain three handsome octavo volumes. The intention of these will be explained in the following letter:—

My dear Christian Sister,

Believe me, I appreciate your extraordinary kindness and your fertile resources, which, however undeserved, alas! I can truly say are only what I should look for from you; they do credit alike to a Christian heart and a Christian head. But I must write to give facts, rather than feelings, since I cannot but perceive and acknowledge that your letter demands my most serious attention. At the same time, deeply as I feel this, I have no fear or doubt but that my reply will perfectly and entirely satisfy your candid mind; for I write to no common woman. I know you are not one of those whose mind is made up at once and for ever, without a chance or hope of change or

alteration, however certain, proofs or conviction may be.—No! she whom I glory to call my friend, is above such low and faulty motives. She knows,

“Mutation is the name of all below,”

and on that principle she acts and feels, regardless of the scoffs of the worldly or the tremors of the faint-hearted. I therefore, without a doubt or a hesitation, place before you *facts*, among which are those of the dearest portion of my life, and I then leave all in your hands, assured that I shall rest perfectly content with your decision. Then, suffer me to say that you have laboured under a delusion—a most amiable and a most probable one, but still a delusion; and though I say probable, I can assert, with truth, that your letter gave me the most unfeigned astonishment; not so much at the idea of my heart becoming entangled amid the chains and the snares that surrounded it at Hastings, but on the selection you had made for its aspirations. Believe me, that your dear sister presents to my imagination a picture of all that is soft and tender in woman; words cannot express the lovely nature of her simplicity and affection, her tenderness and *naïveté*. She is indeed that which one hears of so often, but so rarely sees, a genuine unsophisticated child of nature. But this character, lovely as it is, is not one that could ever command or fix affections—poor though they be—such as mine. Had my heart been free to choose, I should certainly have had the ambition to look higher; I should have looked among those minds, near hers it is true, but, ah, how far advanced in truth, in dignity, in vastness, in strength, in piety! One who would share with my poor heart

“The joys and sorrows of a changing world,”

must not only be

"A lovely apparition sent
To be a moment's ornament,"

but

"A being breathing thoughtful breath,
A traveller between life and death ;
A perfect woman nobly planned,
To *warn*, to comfort, and *command* ;
And yet a spirit still and bright,
With something of an angel-light."

Yes, I repeat, had my affections been mine to bestow, I should have been daring enough to have raised my eyes to those

"Of Juno port and awe commanding face,
Types of the mind within, that governs every grace."

But my heart was not my own to offer ; no beauty, however rare, no fascination, however irresistible, no piety, however exalted, can have any influence over him whose affections are once given to another. At least I hold that wretch—that blot on humanity—unworthy of the name of man, who could be trifling with the affections of one woman, while his heart and his faith were given to another. Judge then, my dear sister, or rather sisters—for while I address you, I feel I also address the sister, peculiarly, of your heart and home, my dear and valued friend Mary Anne—judge of the poignancy of my feelings, in becoming sensible that those I so esteem, so venerate, should deem me capable of conduct unworthy a man, a Christian, not to say a professor ! Oh, that words had power to convey to you my sense of the baseness of such villany ! But I leave it to your own noble natures to conceive that for me, which my poor powers of eloquence fail to express.

And now, having given my own side, allow me to say that I have the happiness of thinking that any fears on the score of your beloved sister are quite misplaced. I, who

know all that passed between us, can feel assured, that, however you may have been deceived, she herself was not. If her tender and affectionate nature might, under any other circumstances, have indulged a tenderness, from which the highest characters do not shrink, she must have learned and understood, from the guarded manner in which she was received, the true state of the case. But, observe, I speak hypothetically, for I cannot for a moment believe that your dear Fanny had other feelings than those shared in common with you and your beloved Mary Anne. However, were it otherwise, I repeat, that passages passed between us, calculated entirely to rectify any mistakes. I can fearlessly appeal to many instances of caution on my part. You can all bear me witness that I abstained from the intimacy yourself and my friend, Mary Anne, permitted to me, of calling you by your endearing Christian names. I never allowed myself this liberty towards your dear Fanny, and she would be able to recall a passage on the subject, in one of our conversations, where I playfully alluded to the happiness I should have in witnessing, some day, her change of name, when united to the man of her choice. What motive, but caution, could I have for not availing myself, as I might have done, of a permission which, under the circumstances, you imagine would have been one so soothing and so hopeful to my feelings? Again, I was uneasy at your affectionate sister's retention of a handkerchief of mine, and, as she would bear me witness, I did not rest till she had restored it. I perceived that she had cut out the mark, which, unhappily, was that of my true name, and by which she discovered the secret of my *incognito*. This piece of confidence between us, this, her most unhappy discovery, and the earnest simplicity with which she compelled me to disclose it, and with it a great part of my history, gave, in your eyes, the appearance of an attraction on my part, which, as I have explained, did

not and could not exist. But beyond this even, might be the extraordinary delicacy of my position with regard to her, through our mutual connexion with my aunt, Lady Minette ; towards all your dear family I felt this ; I was constantly pierced, as by spears, and my heart often upbraided me for enjoying, as it were by stealth, the happiness of intercourse with characters, minds, and hearts, which would perhaps, were all made known, cast me off in scorn. But I glory to say, I did not then know the full nobleness of the natures I had to do with, which I was judging, I take shame to myself to confess, by rules of a worldly measure. To return, however. If I felt my unhappy concealment towards you, how much more towards your dear Fanny—my own aunt's adopted daughter ? I often made allusions to her on this subject, and so plainly, that I frequently feared, afterwards, she must inevitably discover my secret. One more remark, and I have done with this part of the subject, which, believe me, it deeply wounds my delicacy to touch upon ; but my character is dearer to me than my life, and to clear that, I, like you, scorn considerations of mere refinement. I need only allude to my good aunt's avowed desire, of a connexion between my unworthy self and your dear sister, and let me ask what would have been my motives in the conduct you imagine, had my own wishes conspired with hers ! Be assured it deeply wounds my sense of delicacy, which is remarkably acute on matters where your sex is concerned, to enter thus into such a subject ; but I repeat, as you so justly and philosophically observe, that minor considerations must give way to those of a higher order. And now, my beloved friends, permit me to enter upon a topic which I dare not approach to any human being but your own two selves, and believe me, to any but those of whose sympathy I am assured, it would be a hard, indeed an impossible matter, to write. Where the heart is concerned

"We shrink us up for fear,
Like leaves of asperle;
For none but those who once have felt,
Can feel as lovers feel."

But I cast away such common thoughts, for I have not to do with those of common stamp. Then let me impart to you, that I have been for some months past bound, irrevocably bound, to her who is now to form the happiness of my future life, as she has long been the arbitress of my fate. When I was at Hastings, my faith was pledged to her; it was nothing but a sense of honour that had for a time driven me from her presence; and the occasion of this banishment, doubtless you, who have so affectionately sympathized in my unhappy circumstances, can divine. But she—my beloved intended—who has the soul of generosity, discovered my retreat, and, in the nobleness of her nature, devised a scheme which should at once relieve me from my embarrassments, without compromising my too sensitive feelings. Oh, that I were at liberty to disclose to you a trait of character, which would at once clear my honour from the doubts you have cast upon it, and introduce my future partner to your notice, in a light that must at once secure for her your admiration and love! But, alas! this, and the avowal of the causes of my unhappy *incognito*, are for the present denied me. I can only look forward to a day, not very far distant I trust, when these mists of mystery shall fall away like the mountain-dew, and you will see all in the lovely tints of joy and truth. Meanwhile, suffer me to entreat your kindness for her who is so soon to be

"The earthly sun round which my joys revolve."

How far from her merits is the notion you have been suffered to imbibe! I doubt not your noble nature would cry:—

"I weigh not Cræsus's wealth a straw,"

and would at the first almost scorn one who had at her command

"The power and pomp of gold."

But I well know your noble nature will discard such a feeling when you learn the true character of the chosen of my heart. I leave all turns of eloquence and romantic flights to those whom truth is too mean to serve, and I will simply state that my fair *fiancée* admires and venerates every one of your favourite writers and preachers, that she actually came hither purposely to sit under our excellent minister, the Rev. Mr. Honey, that she subscribes annually one sovereign to the Missionary, Bible, and Jews Societies, and that she patronises and forwards all bazaars, and shilling and sixpenny cards, that have for their object the spiritual welfare of souls. Her unwearied zeal and activity in such pursuits, I have never seen equalled, at least, never but *once*; and her heart yearns to become acquainted in quarters where she feels all the obligation will be on one side. As a mark of her esteem, and desire of being some day personally known, she begs me to enclose the books you will find in this packet;—two for yourselves, and one for your excellent and devoted North, whose goodness and piety still fill a happy niche in my memory. My beloved betrothed thinks you will find the book in which she has inscribed your name, a solace to you in dark days, and a joy to you in bright ones. The one she presents to our dear Mary Anne, is a book which I pointed out to her, as one from which I myself found so much benefit, after my godless career, when I could truly say with my dear friend's favourite poet—Young:—

"Thus I long travelled in the ways of man,
And dancing with the rest the giddy maze,

• • • • •

At length have housed me in a humble shed."

In spite of the difference of our course, and of superiorities, it would be folly for me, though of the so called superior sex, to deny ; I sometimes have flattered myself that there are similitudes in our minds, that will lead my valued friend to enjoy and appreciate this work as I did. I must impart to you, before I close, the news so dear to myself, that before the next week ends I hope to call my now beloved intended—my bride. We set off immediately for the continent, where we spend a year, after which time, I trust to be permitted to introduce to my dearest friends—my dearest wife.

Many thanks for your news on that unhappy business. I grieve at the pain your generous nature must undergo ; but it is a noble sacrifice of private feeling to duty. I heard the whole story yesterday, through my sister, who sent me a most affectionate letter, and though it was one of congratulation on my present happy prospects, she could not resist entering upon the history of the lost brooch. All the public sympathy seems on your side, as I should expect. My dear sister Barbara is intimate with the Childes, and entertains, in common with them, the most enthusiastic veneration for yourself and all your dear family.

With my devoted respects to your excellent parents, believe me, &c.

Constance was a good deal perplexed at this letter.—Indeed perplexed would be a very poor word to use, to express the first feeling of her mind when she found the extraordinary mistake her correspondent had made between her two sisters. But the more she considered the matter,

the more all other feelings sunk into simple perplexity. If she set him right as to her meaning, it was only throwing herself into a more endless perplexity, and evidently entering into a controversy which would be of no avail. Besides which, clever as she was, Constance really hardly knew in what way to continue the correspondence; and above all, one party or other must have been mistaken, and Constance did not like to dwell upon that alternative. As she re-read the letter, and allowed her mind to receive the new impression which her friend gave of his *fiancée*, Constance began to feel her former views receive considerable modification. True, in the interim between her own letter and this reply, she had heard many small things which were calculated to shake her confidence in her friend's veracity. They had all visited Lady Minette, and had heard from that lady many small facts inconsistent with her nephew's statements. One was, that certainly two years ago Lady Minette had contemplated* his marriage with Fanny, but that since she had expressly told him that now that could not be, and that she had said in her late letter to Hastings, when persuading and even commanding him to marry the widow, that she would give neither of them—naming Fanny and himself—a sixpence if they married. Again, at the same time, she mentioned that his debts were some thousands, while Constance knew well that he had stated them to North as being no more than £500. Nevertheless, before deciding upon any thing, Constance resolved to seek Mary Anne, and see what that sister thought of the letter. She had not exactly told Mary Anne what she had done, but Mary Anne was shrewd enough to guess, and Constance was shrewd enough to suspect it was no secret. It therefore required very little preface before putting the letter into Mary Anne's hands. It was perhaps the first time in her life that Constance was inclined to be led by Mary Anne, and certainly the first

time she had ever gone so far in consulting her sister, who on her side felt the distinction.

During the reading Mary Anne burst out into various exclamations—"How can he make such a mistake! What can he be thinking of!" but at the end her deliberate opinion was given—"Oh, Constance," said she, "you must let it pass; it will only make matters worse to notice it. You know Fanny would be sure to take it up, and I—I don't care about it—I am sure I forgive him with all my heart; besides, you know, I told you I thought he was going to be married. Oh, I think we shall like to know Mrs. Grange very much!—such a rich woman, you know! And what an elegant book—bound, really, and beautiful gilt edges! I am sure it must have cost a guinea! How very kind of her! Do you not think so? Then, you know, she is evidently a decided character. You see she has gone there on purpose to sit under Mr. Honey. What a beautiful letter it is!" exclaimed she, after looking it over again; "such an elegant composition, so full of poetry, and such discernment of character. How exactly he understands you, Constance!"

Constance assented now and then to some parts of this address, but her object at present was to see her sister's mind, rather than to express her own.

Presently Mary Anne, after again looking at the letter, encouraged by Constance's confidence, exclaimed, almost in soliloquy, "I wonder which of us he means!"

"Oh, that is plain enough!" returned Constance, quickly, pointing to the line containing the words dashed under, 'warn' and 'command,' which she repeated. Presently she added, "But, Mary Anne, there are one or two points rather doubtful; I am not quite satisfied as to what we heard about the debts, and the other things we spoke of; there seems something not quite true there."

"Oh, but you know all that was before he was converted!"

Constance was silent.

"Mary Anne continued, "Oh, I don't think much of that! You know we must not talk of what people do before conversion, or there would be no end of it. Besides, don't you know what that fine old saint, Mr. Best, said the other day to Mrs. Hall?"

"No; what was it?" asked Constance, a little vexed not to have heard what her sister knew of two such noted characters.

"Oh, I thought it most striking," replied Mary Anne, "and it confirms my theory of pious parents and disobedient children, so I particularly noticed it; I heard it at our party the other night. He said that in his long experience of character, he had always remarked, as a most extraordinary fact, that persons who had been the most notorious liars—I use his own words—when once converted, became the most spiritual-minded Christians; and that he could prove this to be true in the example of his nearest and dearest friends."

"I certainly have hitherto had a prejudice in favour of truth—at least in converted characters," observed Constance, scarcely in reply to her sister.

"Oh, yes, certainly, in *converted* characters," returned Mary Anne; "but Osmond Guppy was not converted then, so we need think of it only as an advantage in his case; that is, if dear Mr. Best's theory is true."

After this, Constance sought her mother, and the end of a discussion on the subject was, Constance reading aloud the correspondence between herself and Mr. Boodle. Mrs. Duff was a little vexed at the step her daughter had taken, saying it was a proof of the innocence of Constance's heart to notice any little attentions that might have escaped a young man, who proved to have been circumstanced as

their friend was, with respect to one of Mrs. Grange's fortune ; she advised, however, passing it all over, and writing a friendly note of congratulation to Mr. Boodle, on his happy prospects. Constance, then, putting together her mother's and her sister's opinion, thought it advisable to give up her first impressions on Mr. Boodle's conduct ; she also considered North's reflection, that we cannot expect perfection in any one, and that we should be ready to forgive, even if our brethren have offended or injured us. Constance therefore did write, as her mother advised, and the result of the letter will shortly be seen. Mary Anne, meanwhile, had possessed herself of Mr. Boodle's epistle, which she had not half enough perused, and retired to study it in her room. She, too, at length came to a conclusion ; namely, that though some of her friend's remarks and quotations clearly designated Constance—such as the words Constance herself had pointed out, and the very marked quotation with the word angel in it, which appeared entirely to reflect back a conversation they had at Hastings—yet Osmond Guppy had always called herself—that is, Mary Anne—Juno. Thus, Mary Anne returned the letter, perfectly satisfied.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

Hate never looked so lovely yet.

Moore.

SOON after these letters had passed, Fanny arrived at home. One morning, as all the ladies of the family were sitting
together—a rather unusual circumstance—Fanny left the

room, for her work-box. When she re-entered, what was her amaze to find their Hastings *incognito* seated amidst the family party, as if he had been there for hours! He was chatting, and all laughing, in high spirits. Poor Fanny felt as if she would have sunk into the earth; but he rose, and with precisely the same gentle manner he had always used towards her, he stepped forward and offered his hand. "I said, when last we had the misery of parting," said he, "that I trusted duty would not always stand in the way of my happiness. I have now only one more thing to desire."

Fanny was so confused in mind that she could not at all comprehend his words, but his manner brought her more to herself, and made her more of a woman than any thing that had ever before happened to her. "Indeed," replied she, simply, and very calmly, "it is difficult to imagine how duty can bring you here at this moment; we thought you engaged far otherwise."

The visitor was never perhaps so much at a loss for a speech in his life—certainly, he never felt so sudden and perplexing a change of ideas. He had only the moment before heard that Fanny was in the house, and his greeting was, as it were, almost an experiment; though, at the same time, he did not consider hers a character that called for much study or management. Finding her at Winton, and perceiving a new trait of character in her manner, in one moment he suspected, and in the next concluded, that she had seen his letter, and he again regretted, that partly intention, and partly haste at the time, had caused the omission of a clause he had projected, of making his communication a matter of strict confidence between the two home sisters, both for friendship's sake, and also to avoid wounding the feelings of the soft and delicate Fanny. He had counted much on the alienation he had observed between Fanny and her home circle, and had imagined his letter would be especially safe from her perusal. Now he

perceived the more open course would have been the safest, and he bitterly blamed his folly—his folly in writing as he had done—in coming to Winterton without being entirely assured of Fanny's absence—or in writing or coming at all. With the slightest of pauses however, he continued, "I was but this moment informed of your being at Winterton."

"Yes—" interposed Mary Anne, stopping suddenly for want of a name. She was going to add, "Osmond Guppy was enquiring after you," and probably she would have cut the difficulty by pressing the monosyllable "he" into her service, but the gentleman, availing himself of the slight breathing space her interruption afforded, went on to remark upon Fanny's faded looks, and to express a fear that Hastings air, in spite of her sad accident and illness, agreed with her better than London.

"I think," observed Charlotte, who was seated at the same work-table as her sister, "I think Fanny exerted herself a great deal too much, both after her accident and after her illness, and she has felt the effects since her return."

Fanny acquiesced in her sister's remark, as it had been one they had made the day before; it did not, however, occasion the discussion in the family that ensued then.

The gentleman alone replied. He spoke of those of a truly unselfish nature, who never spared themselves, and then in a playful manner reverted to Fanny's dislike of medical men, and feared she had not sufficiently remembered the lesson she learned from the tale he had had the happiness of relating to her one day. Fanny's heart sickened while he talked; she felt she both abhorred (it was not too strong a word for poor Fanny) and despised him. He, on the contrary, seemed fascinated to talk alone to Fanny, though he would gladly have fled out of the room. He could not say her manner was not precisely what it

ever had been at Hastings, during the moments he actually sat with the rest of her family ; it was only when general animated conversation took place, or in a *tête-a-tête*, that Fanny became truly herself ; so he thought, but he did not know Fanny's true self. He longed, by any means, to provoke a new state of feeling in the room, and after some more attempts to awaken Fanny's interest, he availed himself of some remark of her sister's to change his situation. Fanny had taken up her work, and continued at her table, working, and talking with Charlotte, while the rest discoursed in lively, if not merry tones. Mary Anne was rallying their visitor on his situation, at first timidly, by practice fearlessly—Constance asking innumerable questions on the mind and religious attainments of Mrs. Grange, while she was selecting from her heap some tracts—Mrs. Duff lamenting that the bridal pair were going abroad for a year, since she had an opportunity of recommending them to both an upholsterer and a glass and china warehouse, under the most favourable circumstances ; the first was a young man just setting up for himself, whom latterly she had been employing ; the other was selling off in great haste. The present of books was also acknowledged, with many flattering speeches.

Meanwhile Charlotte and Fanny pursued their work, which was a piece on which both were employed together, at the small table apart from the rest. This was entirely a Hastings scene, and the visitor, with all his cleverness, could not make out any thing one way or other to satisfy his mind on any one point. He more than once returned to the solitary sisters, and talked over their work. Fanny referred him to Charlotte, as herself was only her sister's assistant ; and Charlotte continued the discourse, entering into a regular discussion on needlework, and showing a talent and liveliness, her auditor had never suspected in her. But somehow or other, there seemed a drag on the

conversation, and before very long the visitor rose to take his leave.

Great was the consternation this movement occasioned in the minds of the other Miss Duffs. They had thought he certainly meant to stay dinner, according to Constance's note ; but the gentleman was inexorable ; he could not spare a minute longer from Cheltenham, and the plea was unanswerable. He however took a most friendly leave, anticipating all sorts of happy meetings after the short term of a year, and affectionately wishing an improvement in Fanny's looks.

"I am sure he meant to stay longer," said Mary Anne, "for he sent away his cabriolet, and when I went for my book to get him to put his initials, North told me that he desired his servant to come at ten o'clock. How very odd!"

"People are odd at such times, my dear," said her mother.

CHAPTER XLIX.

Whom see I yonder so demurely smile ?

Young.

IT was these two letters and a report from Fanny of this scene, that Emily now conveyed to Ellen and Grace at Fulham. Mr. Boodle was wrong, Fanny had not seen or heard of the correspondence at the time of his visit ; but his visit was the occasion of her becoming acquainted with all that had passed, and Lady Minette, upon Fanny's account of these documents, had insisted on seeing them. They therefore came into Fanny's keeping, and she had now entrusted them to Emily. Emily was bent on her own way of exposing the whole of this incident ; without any preface beyond that which has been before related,

she handed over the first letter (Constance's) to Ellen, and requested her to read it aloud. Emily could not have trusted herself with the office ; she well knew that she could not have passed the passage where the word "sugar-plum" occurs, without a regular explosion of laughter. But Ellen had a singular command of countenance when necessary, for she read the whole letter through, and crossed Emily's rubicon, the sugar-plum, without showing the slightest approach towards a symptom of amusement. She once or twice looked up towards her sister, with a glance and a quiet remark, which increased Emily's propensity to mirth more and more. Emily however restrained her amusement, for the sake of watching Grace's countenance, for she thought, surely now her triumph over her friend's philosophy was sure ; and probably had Emily made her point less public, and set about it in a less formal manner, her success would have been complete. But Grace was aware that Emily intended her to manifest signs of entertainment, and therefore although the matter of the letter, together with Ellen's straightforward unmoved manner of reading it, were to her ear irresistible, she listened to the whole from beginning to end without exhibiting more of her feeling than a lurking smile now and then would betray.

Emily triumphed at the end ; "Well," cried she, "now I am content ! Grace's demure smile is as good to me and better than the outright laugh I have so long predicted and desired to see ! Only say, Grace, that Constance is absurd."

"Well, her schemes are absurd enough," said Grace, laughing now without effort or disguise ; "what can she have been thinking of ?"

Here Ellen in her own particular style of countenance, voice, and manner, put in a few words of reproof to Grace for her merriment. None but those who thoroughly knew her, could have possibly guessed whether she was in jest

or earnest. Presently however this was made sufficiently clear by her joining in the outward expression of mirth, which her sister and friend were now at no pains to check.

Emily continued to repeat the words and propositions which seemed the most to dwell upon her memory and tickle her fancy. "Oh," cried she, between her paroxysms, "an unfortunate and interesting young man, in love!—sugar-plums!—chimney sweeps!—Oh! prescriptions! cures! what a doctor of mind and morals Constance would make!" and so on; while the others fully satisfied Emily in the sympathy they showed in her feelings and exclamations.

At length, when the party became more capable of calm reflection, Ellen observed, "I am sure this design of Constance's offers a very fair illustration of our conversation the other day concerning the Duffs, and their want of the sense of the absurd. If Constance did not destroy that in herself, she would perceive the extraordinary nature of her conduct."

"Well, it really is a proof of the fallacy of people trying to make themselves good and wise upon rules of their own devising," remarked Emily, as she fell into her usual manner; "who could imagine an act from beginning to end more unsuitable, more revolting, than this before us!"

CHAPTER L.

"Why don't you send this Donald Bean Lean, whom I hate for his smoothness and duplicity even more than for his rapine, out of your country at once? No cause should induce me to tolerate such a character."

"No cause, Flora?" said the chieftain significantly.

"No cause, Fergus! not even that which is nearest my heart. Spare it the omen of such evil supporters!"

Scott.

AFTER some more discussion on this part of the correspondence, Emily reminded her friends that she had the reply to read them, and warned them that *that* was of a very different character from Constance's letter, assuring them it was by no means laughable. "I really," added she, "hardly like to read it to you, but it is right that you should know the whole story, and Fanny indeed wishes it."

After this introduction, Emily read Mr. Boodle's answer; and indeed the different sensation the two letters occasioned was remarkable. When Emily ceased, nobody spoke at the first, but after a short space a few abrupt exclamations of concentrated indignation and scorn escaped the friends, more expressive in real life, though perhaps less satisfactory in historical relation, than the most rounded periods of the accomplished novelist, or the most laboured oration of the rhetorician. Ellen actually shed tears of anger on the writer's account, and of grief on Fanny's, whilst Grace's heart burned hot within her, unable and undesirous of finding words to express her feelings of disgust and abhorrence.

After some time, in which these feelings among the trio vented themselves, as it were, in commenting on small

pieces of Mr. Boodle's inconsistency and falsehood, Grace remarked, "But I cannot imagine what the Duffs can be thinking of! How could they allow him to come, after talking in that way of Fanny?"

"That is what poor Fanny feels so much," said Emily; "she complained to me that she had no mother and no sisters; that she was alone in the world, and was very melancholy indeed. She had just before spoken of Charlotte and Campbell, and called them noble creatures....."

"But Campbell was not at home at that time," said Ellen, "he went to Frank Freeman the day after we were at Winterton."

"Yes, but he had said or done something that was a comfort to poor Fanny; besides, she talked of his behaviour in Jessie's case, and said what was true, that he was the prime mover in all that was done, or rather not done, for Jessie. This was quite true, for he spoke to his father, and put a stop to the Bow-street officers, and to other plans Constance was bent upon."

"I observed that quality in Campbell," said Grace, "though he is so quiet, he always gets his own way. I was quite amused sometimes, once especially, when his mother almost refused to have Frank Freeman at dinner. Campbell brought in his friend after all, and managed so as to satisfy every body."

"Campbell always was a good dear fellow," said Emily, warmly, "but I was going to tell you about Fanny. I reminded her of her grateful expressions concerning Campbell and Charlotte, and she then vehemently bore witness to the goodness of both to her, at this crisis. She said, that Charlotte had come out in a new character lately; she had befriended the unfortunate, and seemed ready to die for the cause of truth and justice. I tried to keep her to this point, and encouraged the subject of the lost brooch, to which she often alluded; but she soon flew off

to her own distress, and dwelt much more on those who had injured her, than on Campbell, Charlotte, and her sisters here, as she called us ; though certainly we outnumber the opposite party. But this is what I call poor Fanny's weakness ; she cannot see or embrace such facts and reflections as these ; her misfortune is want of sense."

" Say rather, Emily, want of feelings properly disciplined," observed Ellen.

" Ah," returned her sister, smiling, " I know Ellen is always pining to make intellect and heart the same thing !"

At this time Fanny wrote the following lines :—

When hope was young in hours of spring,
When life was blessedness,
Each moment carried on its wing
A joy my heart to bless.

The sounds of home, of earth, of air,
The voice of bird and bee,
And e'en the city's busy stir,
Brought happiness to me.

All now is changed, my heart no more
Throbs high at rapture's voice ;
The charm is past, the spell is o'er,
That bade its chords rejoice.

I've seen the glory pass from earth,
The crown from manhood fall,
In place of honour, truth, and worth,
I've seen a sable pall.

I've seen the close of sister's love,
Of mother's tenderness,
Seen helpless anguish fail to move,
And pitiful distress.

I've seen them join the false and bold,
The cruel and the base,
And for the sake of servile gold,
Faith, honour, truth, disgrace.

Oh, bitterest lot, all thought beyond
To wretched mortals given,
To see the lovely and the fond
Forget their faith to heaven.

Then tell me not of visions fair,
Of joys for me in store,
The glow of earth, of waves, of air,
Returning as of yore.

No—leave me ! let me toll the knell
Of honour, virtue, truth,
Of rapture's charm, and hope's high spell,
That bound ecstatic youth.

Then will I seek dark solitude,
Sad hearts last earthly tie ;
There, far apart from natures rude,
Where scarcely sin nor cares intrude,
To check or mar a holier mood,
I'll lay me down and die.

CHAPTER LI.

Look now on that Adventurer, who hath paid
His vows to fortune, who in cruel slight
Of virtuous hope, of liberty, and right,
Hath followed wheresoe'er a way was made
By the blind goddess, ruthless, undismayed ;
And so hath gained at last a prosperous height.

Wordsworth.

AT the close of the foregoing discourse between the young ladies, Emily had wondered how she should ever keep Constance's letter and schemes from the knowledge of her brother George, but she did not need the entreaties of her auditors to prevent her from exposing any part of this correspondence. "I only wonder," added she, "how each and all of the Duffs have allowed us to see it ; I am sure it is not a fit sight for any body else." Saying this, she folded up the letters and replaced them in her bag, since she heard signs of her brother's approach. The young ladies however were fatigued with walking and standing in the garden, as they had been doing so long, and passed into the house ; at length they seated themselves in a small ante-room, beyond the drawing-rooms, which was a favourite retreat of theirs. Presently, George came in with an open newspaper in his hand, scolding and fuming in his amusing way, at their having just given him the slip ; he had seen them in the garden, and had been in vain seeking them there for the last half hour.

"Half hour !" cried Emily, laughing, "then of course, George, you have some news in that paper to tell, pray what is it ?"

"News that always pleases young ladies," replied he.

"And excites young gentlemen," continued his sister ;
"a marriage of course—but not our veritable Guppy,
surely—that was not to be till to-morrow."

"Well, listen," said George, and he read as follows :

"Marriage in high life."

This morning was led to the hymeneal altar, the amiable and celebrated Mrs. Grange, relict of the late Tobias Grange, of Fish Street Hill, Esq. The happy object of her choice is Obadiah Boodle, Esq., who changes his name to that of his amiable bride, agreeably to the will of her late estimable husband. The ceremony was performed by the Rev. Mr. Honey. The settlements are said to be in accordance with the generous nature of the lady. In the evening there was a splendid entertainment at the public rooms on the occasion, upon a most magnificent scale, when the bride and bridegroom bade farewell to their numerous and delighted friends, and the next day the happy couple proceeded in an elegant chariot and four, on their way to the continent, where they intend to pass the next year.

The Wedding Ball."

"Ball !" cried the sisters, "what can you mean, George ?"

"Why, I mean what I say, Ball," replied George ;
"if it is so extraordinary, why did you go and hide yourselves here, instead of coming and hearing the news the moment I came in, but now let me read."—George continued,—*"The Wedding Ball."*

"But what will Constance say, I wonder, and Mr. Honey ?" again interrupted Ellen ; "and what a match to expose in such a manner ! I do think people do choose the most unsuitable times for grand parties and balls !"

"Witness our well-beloved cousin, Lady Penny," interposed George, who was always ready with an allusion to the late christening entertainment.

"How could he ever consent to such a thing?" continued Ellen.

"Never mind that, Ellen, only listen," said her brother, and he began ;

" ' There was a night of joyous revelry,
And beauty and rank, most rare and bright,
Had mingled to grace this jubilee ;
For this was a ball on a bridal night.
And music shed forth its influence sweet,
As it fell in a silver sound ;
'Twas echoed again by twinkling feet,
As the butterflies gay, with the antelope bound.' "

"Oh, George, impossible !" cried Grace.

"You must be inventing," exclaimed Emily, "let me see !"

"No, indeed, I am not inventing," said George, showing the verses, "every word is here, and you shall see it afterwards, let me go on....."

" ' And perfumes were there, both rich and rare,
And flowers surpassing the light,
While their odour gushed forth and clogged the air,
And died of their own delight.
And wine was seen in its ruby cup,
That was eagerly grasped by those,
Who athirst in their beauty, drain'd it up,
Like the summer's dew on the rose.' "

"Of course it's a burlesque," cried Emily ; "well, I must say it is capital, and well deserved by the occasion. Well really this is something almost as good as my personal chastisement."

"They certainly are most apt and charming lines," said Grace, laughing as the rest did ; while George in modu-

lated tones repeated some of the expressions, which seemed to delight his ear, especially dwelling on the expression Jubilee, which he declared was so very neat and happy an allusion to the age of the bride. He continued—

“ ‘But the gay bridegroom was the pride of the night.’ ”

“ ‘Is that really there ?’ ” said Ellen ; “ ‘how very daring !’ ”

“ ‘How very suitable, rather,’ ” replied her brother—

“ ‘But the gay bridegroom was the pride of the night,
All the women admired again and again,
And ardently looked at the lovely sight,
And gazed till they gazed in pain.’ ”

“ ‘Well,’ ” interrupted Emily, “ ‘I must say the author is very bold ;—not a word of the bride, too !—so true to the nature of the circumstances.’ ”

“ ‘Oh, I think it the most perfect thing I ever saw !’ ” said George ; “ ‘but let me finish—

‘But ’tis not the spell of his handsome face,
Though due homage no heart could refuse,
His beauty ’tis true had but added a grace,
To the spell that arose from his polished shoes.’ ”

A very slight pause followed the last word, when Emily exclaimed for the rest, “ ‘Oh, George, you abominable creature ! You have almost half cheated us all with Warren’s blacking.* It is really too bad. I, who was never taken in with those puffs in my life. Well, really,’ ” said she, taking the paper, “ ‘it is excellent ! how exactly it fits in to our illustrious *incognito* ;—the entertainment too—so unusual now-a-days.’ ”

“ ‘I suppose it is all true—the marriage, I mean,’ ” said Grace, looking over her friend ; “ ‘it really looks very like a burlesque ; but I suppose there *was* a party.’ ”

* It is scarcely necessary to say that these lines are actually what they are above stated to be.

"Or some dear good wag of an editor has contrived it all beautifully," continued Emily. "See how exactly the verses follow the paragraph on the marriage—scarcely a line between! Well, George, I must say it was most tempting, and I begin to doubt whether you have deceived us at all after all."

And thus with many more such remarks ended the announcement of a marriage, which, though it excited amusement, had excited also, and still did excite, feelings of a much sterner character in the hearts of the young party.

CHAPTER LII.

I wondered then, but after found it true.

Dryden.

THE history of this eventful month cannot be better closed than by an extract from a letter Grace wrote to Ellen some months afterwards. It ran thus:—

"As you say, Ellen, how differently things turn out from what one expects! Three times lately I have been looking forward to see so much of you, and each time have been disappointed! I can scarcely believe that it was only the day after George read us the news of the Cheltenham marriage, that you were called back to Langham, and that I have not seen you since. Indeed, the loss of my Langham visit would have been a severer disappointment than the others, if the occasion of it were not so serious, and if your grandmamma had benefitted as we had hoped from your visit to Ramsgate, and continued less of an invalid

than she does. Still, I cannot help sometimes wondering how it is, that so many obstacles stand in the way of the very thing—the only thing, it appears to me—that can help me in, and out of, the difficulties and perplexities that seem to beset me on all sides, in my view of the world around me. Though I have mamma always so near me, I still want you to talk over many things; and with such wishes, I often think of all the events connected with our Hastings visit. By the bye, I have never told you mamma's opinion of the close of the history of that memorable month; I know you will be glad to hear it, and the more so, as she sees things so very much as we did. Emily was highly delighted the other day, the only time we have seen the Duffs, at mamma's reply to Constance, who was lamenting over ever having allowed herself to wear or possess a brooch at all. Mamma, in her quiet, kind way, just said, 'My dear Constance, I agree with you, that the less you have to do with brooches the better.' I wish Constance would attend to what mamma says; even such a hint as this, followed up, would be of so much service to her; but she pays less attention to mamma, I think, than to an entire stranger. I had a talk with mamma one day, on the controversy between you and me, concerning Mr. Guppy and his *reward*, as you call it, of the rich widow. Mamma said that the feeling of mankind certainly was your way, and that, as such, it should be highly respected; but that the course of the world, as providentially arranged, was *my* way, and she did not blame me for being satisfied that Mr. Guppy had got such wealth with such a wife. So, Ellen, you see I have reason still to hold my opinion, for mamma has every right to despise wealth by word, since every body knows she has all her life purchased that right, by simple disregard of all its attractions. I confess I still rejoice to think that Mr. Guppy may revel in a boundless ocean of molten gold if he pleases. Mamma said that

she did not identify Mr. Guppy with the Duffs and their religious friends, for that, however they might deliberately defend him, and take him up, he was after all no more than a dissipated young man of the world. For this reason, she would not class his match among those of the Duffs' friends, to whose marriages she often particularly objects. This seems to me very right and fair. But I was going to add, that mamma looked upon Mr. Guppy's talents as being really extraordinary. She did not say, but I think she believes, Emily's view of his case ; she said he had adapted every part of his conduct and behaviour so exactly to suit the characters he had to do with, and that his letter to Constance and Mary Anne was quite a masterpiece. I never thought it so clever, because it was so shockingly unjust and cruel, and so broadly full of unrefined compliments altogether ; I wondered how any body could be taken in by it for a single moment. Mamma replied that my opinion was correct, and added, that Mr. Guppy would not have written such a letter to me ;—certainly, I cannot fancy receiving such an one, I should feel very unhappy to do so, for I must have brought it on myself, I think. Oh, no, Ellen ! I feel sure he would never have dared to write such a letter to you, or me, or Emily ; and this reflection is certainly a consolation, though I am aware that Emily would turn round upon me, and make one of her retorts, on the inference which this confession involves. And talking of confessions, Ellen, I have some on this very subject, in connexion with the incidents concerning the lost brooch, to make to you ; for I then thought some things, for which I fear you considered me very obstinate. I had such a firm notion fixed in my mind of the goodness and religion of the Duffs, that it seemed to me almost as shocking to doubt them, as to doubt the truth of the Bible itself. I know that this confession will shock and surprise you ; but I can assure you that I cannot get rid of it

now, and feel it even at the moment I write. They seemed to me to represent religion in the world, and I thought they alone were right and true, and that the whole world beside was wrong. Well, Ellen, do not be displeased with me, but I really think so still, as to *principles*. I think their system and doctrines must be right, but I do not think they act up to their principles. I certainly cannot deny,—I see quite plain and clear—that Constance, much as I revered her, did not in an honest straight-forward way follow the thing that is right and just; and I feel that when I see this in the conduct of any body, however good, as evidently and glaringly as I did in hers, I cannot be wrong,—I must be safe in withdrawing myself. By that I mean, by not trusting my mind or my actions to the disposal of such a person, simply I suppose, by being on my guard against such an one. But I wish just to tell you how I came to see all this about Constance so much clearer after you had gone away from us. I knew Constance did not do, as I thought, quite right in Jessie's case. You know I told you, I thought she acted impatiently, and attended more to North than she ought to have done. But then, really, she was so anxious to do good, and had her penitentiary so fixed in her head, that I considered her almost bewildered. I dare say she thought that Jessie would make a respectable beginning to her institution, and that she should do a great deal of good to Jessie, whether guilty or not. Besides this, you know, I could not judge quite fairly on this affair, because it was a matter that concerned me personally, since Jessie belonged to us, and I could not feel sure I thought right about it. For all these reasons, and many others, I made excuses for Constance. But I could not do the same about Fanny's affair, especially after I saw poor Fanny herself the day after you left. I cannot tell you how shocking I thought the behaviour of those two sisters after that letter of his; it is in-

deed a thought which now I do not like to dwell upon. Then I know very well that Constance was not satisfied with Mr. Boodle (I really hardly know by what name to call him;) she was not satisfied, but she cloaked over his conduct, and made excuses for him. Now comparing this with her behaviour to poor Jessie, made me more indignant than I would perhaps confess to any but you and mamma. Only think of her treating Jessie as she did, the moment after Jessie was proved innocent, and at the same time tolerating and defending a man like this! Thus you see, Ellen, my feeling is, that I cannot be doing wrong to cease to esteem or be guided by a person who can act so inconsistently, and as it seems to me beside, so unkindly and unjustly. But after this you must let me add, that as I do not in my thoughts identify Mr. Guppy with the Duffs, or Mary Anne with Constance (because Mary Anne has so little stability or character of her own,) so I do not identify Constance with the religious world—so called. I still believe that world to be religious—though I know you will not allow it—however there may be members professing to belong to it, who act inconsistently with their profession; else, dear Ellen, I ask again, where can we look for religion?"

Cadogan Place.

About this time Grace wrote the following lines, which may claim a place here as a postscript to this letter, and as a counterpart to Fanny's. Those who know Grace Leslie from the foregoing pages, may be able to interpret her meaning, and to find in these verses a comment on the history of this past month.

I pass along life's opening vale,
With faltering tread and slow,
For, ah! I fear my footsteps frail
Should learn aside to go.

Yet why should fear my heart possess ?
Why do I pause and sigh,
And step along in dire distress,
As though no help were nigh ?

Full oft a glorious company
I see before me stand ;
They raise the hand, and beckon me
To join their shining band.

The good, the noble, the high-wrought,
The wise, are at my side ;
They whisper feelings, echo thought,
They aid, they check, they guide.

The while the doubtful, and the mean,
The cold, the unrefined,
With self-convicted looks are seen,
And conscious shrink behind.

Then why still doubtfully should I
Pursue my pensive way ?
Whilst frequent on my dusky sky,
Such glorious visions play.

Ah, sure the light that streams so free
From sacred pages bright,
Will through this vision shine to me
A light, my path to light.

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